

# ALASKA'S OUTDOOR LEGACY

**Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan  
(SCORP)  
2004 – 2009**



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July 19, 2004

Dear Alaskans:

I am pleased to present Alaska's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). This document references preferences, use trends, and issues important to outdoor recreation in Alaska.

Entitled "Alaska's Outdoor Legacy", the plan is a broad look at the outdoor life that is an essential part of our Alaska lifestyle. The importance of recreation to Alaskans is shown by strong support for recreation programs and participation rates in a variety of outdoor activities.

The SCORP plan embraces the concerns of the citizens of Alaska and provides direction and priorities needed to implement strong outdoor recreation programs at all levels of government and the private sector. The objectives identified in the plan: developing a secure funding base for outdoor recreation and maintenance, expanding recreation opportunities on public lands, improving access to recreation resources, and accommodating close-to-home recreation needs will require all of our collective efforts to meet.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Frank H. Murkowski".

Frank H. Murkowski  
Governor

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## **Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2004 – 2009**

State of Alaska  
Frank H. Murkowski,  
Governor

Department of Natural Resources  
Tom Irwin,  
Commissioner

Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (Alaska State Parks)  
Gary Morrison,  
Director

July 2004

This document meets the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) requirements for continued state eligibility to receive matching federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF).

The preparation of the plan was financed in part through a planning grant from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, under provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, as amended).

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2004-2009 (SCORP) explores outdoor recreation-related preferences, issues, use trends, needs and existing and potential facility development. It assists recreation providers, advisory boards, user groups and the public in making outdoor recreation decisions. Alaska State Parks is the lead agency in the development of the SCORP. The plan is available to all interested parties including recreation providers, communities and the public statewide. The SCORP also maintains Alaska's eligibility to participate in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant program.

**THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE:** With 366 million acres and 47,300 miles of shoreline, Alaska is a land of dynamics and extremes, matched by a rich and diverse biota. Land ownership is complex and in transition. Much is in state and federal ownership. State population according to the 2000 census was 626,932. Growth is increasing more slowly than in the past and the population is getting slightly older. Population shifts and trends have implications for outdoor recreation demands. As of July 2000, Alaska's people were about 69.3% Caucasian, 15.6 % Alaska Native, 5.6 % represented two or more races, 4.5% Asian/Pacific and 3.5 % African American. Most Alaskans live in cities, towns, villages and clustered settlements. As of July 1, 2002, there were 149 incorporated cities and 16 boroughs. Forty-two percent of the population lives in the Municipality of Anchorage. Alaska's main economic industries are oil/gas, tourism, seafood, mining and timber. Alaska's 322 million acres of public land available for recreation include about 168 million acres of managed wildlands, and over 30,000 acres of dedicated community recreation land, and many private sector opportunities. However, many recreation opportunities are overcrowded, in short supply, or difficult to access. Alaska State Parks, the largest state park system in the U.S., is the state's largest provider of public wildlands recreation facilities.

**PARTICIPATION:** Alaska State Parks solicited input from a variety of sources for this plan: a statistically valid telephone survey of 600 households, an informal mail out survey which was returned by 992 respondents, the same survey on-line which was completed by over 332 respondents, five public meetings, and a survey of communities and recreation providers. Many recreation agencies and organizations also contributed to this plan.

**TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS:** The statewide telephone survey of 600 households in March of 2004 asked about participation in 38 different outdoor activities and about attitudes toward recreation funding: 88.3% of respondents consider the availability of high quality outdoor recreation opportunities important to their lifestyle; 82.7% drove for sightseeing/pleasure at least once per year; other popular activities include walking for fitness (74%), picnicking (73.6%), day hiking (80.2%, and birdwatching/wildlife viewing (69.6%). Favorite activities (in order of preference) are sport fishing, walking for fitness, day hiking, sport hunting and bicycling or mountain biking. Sea kayaking, back packing and tent camping in the backcountry, ORV or ATV riding, power boating and trail skiing or crosscountry skiing are the top 5 activities Alaskans did not participate in, but would like to. Since the last survey in 1997, the number of people dissatisfied with their park experience

because of crowding is down from 60.18% to 50.8%. Alaskans want more motorized and non-motorized trails. Seventy-nine percent want existing parks and outdoor recreation facilities maintained before any new facilities are built. When new facilities are constructed, they want more opportunities for the disabled (84%), trailheads along roads and highways for trail activities (78.2%), more public use cabins (77.6%), and more toilets (74.4%). To support outdoor recreation, Alaskans are willing to pay for operation and maintenance with registration fees for RV's (91.9%), ATV's (86%), and snowmobiles (85.5%). If a bond initiative on a ballot were to pay for deferred maintenance, 58.7% would vote yes.

**COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS:** Communities responded to a mail out survey asking about facilities and needs. New facilities continue to be the highest priority need overall; maintaining existing facilities continues as the next highest. Community priority for facilities are recreational fields and courts, followed by community parks and playgrounds and trails. Consistent with the last survey, statewide, the most significant barrier to meeting community outdoor recreation needs is chronic lack of funding.

**GOALS/ISSUES/STRATEGIES:** The chief goal for outdoor recreation providers is to offer a range of opportunities for responsible use of Alaska's recreation resources while protecting natural values. The SCORP identifies four issues and goals, along with recommended strategies to meet these goals (Chapter 5 in the plan further details these):

**Issue 1: Lack of Adequate Funding**

Goal 1: Secure a reliable source of funding for outdoor recreation in Alaska. Develop programs that allow important projects to be completed and maintained. Strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with other agencies, private sector and user groups.

Recommended Strategies: support ongoing efforts to reform the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Program; continue interagency communication and cooperative efforts; privatize selected services, facility operation, and maintenance; strengthen alternative funding mechanisms and programs; develop alternative funding sources.

**Issue 2: Opportunities to Meet Recreation Needs in Communities**

Goal 2: Support efforts to assist communities in meeting the outdoor recreation needs of their citizens.

Recommended Strategies: give some communities a higher priority for LWCF matching grants; develop alternative funding sources; design facilities to reflect economic realities and sustainable practices.

**Issue 3: Improved Access to Outdoor Recreation Resources (includes discussion of transportation enhancements, TRAAK program, disabled access, and trail identification/legal access.**

Goal 3: Provide more convenient, legal, and barrier-free access to outdoor recreation opportunities on Alaska's public lands and waters.

Recommended Strategies: implement ISTEPA provisions; improve access to water-based recreation; develop inventory of barrier free outdoor recreation facilities; continue



cooperative planning efforts with “barrier-free” advocacy groups; consider incompatibility among users and user values; continue the identification and legal dedication of existing trails.

#### Issue 4: Shortage of Tourism Opportunities on Public Lands

Goal 4: Support and promote balanced use and development of Alaska’s public lands for outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism.

Recommended Strategies: expand cooperative planning and marketing efforts; maintain and expand private-public nature-based tourism partnerships; promote private sector development on public lands where appropriate; develop year round tourism destinations and related services on public lands; increase capital spending to rehabilitate and expand facilities, expand public use cabin system; promote the Alaska Public Lands Information Centers.

**GRANT PROGRAM:** The Land and Water Conservation Fund grant program is available to state agencies and local governments with parks and recreation powers. It has an open project selection process designed by the state and approved by the National Park Service. Projects that meet priority needs identified in the SCORP may be eligible for matching grants.

**WETLANDS:** SCORP has a wetlands component that must be consistent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wetlands programs and policies and developed cooperatively with other agencies. Wetlands cover 43.3% of Alaska. Distribution is variable. Over the past 200 years, less than 1% has been drained or filled. Wetlands provide many functions and values. Primarily, wetland threats concentrate around the states population centers. SCORP priorities for wetlands acquisition include access to and/or margins of water bodies, including streams, ponds and coastline, emergent wetlands and marshes associated with recreational lakes, public recreation benefit or value, and/or be located within 50 miles of an urban or semi-urban or recreation/tourism area.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **ABOUT THIS PLAN**

#### **PURPOSE**

Alaska's Outdoor Legacy is a guide to recreation-related land acquisition, facility development, and policy for the State of Alaska for 2004 through 2009. This document serves as the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and maintains Alaska's eligibility to participate in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program. This is the eighth in a series of such plans developed as part of Alaska's continuing commitment to outdoor recreation. The plan will also greatly assist the Outdoor Recreation and Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB) citizens advisory board with its role in the LWCF program (see Chapter 5 for more about ORTAB).

#### **REQUIREMENTS**

Land and Water Conservation Fund guidelines specify that a SCORP be prepared every five years, and that each SCORP:

- assess the supply and demand for outdoor recreation,
- contain a wetlands component that identifies wetlands with high recreational values,
- Include an implementation component that outlines recommended actions consistent with plan goals.

#### **GOALS OF SCORP**

- Provide recreation agencies and communities with a reference to outdoor recreation preferences, use trends, and issues relevant to Alaska through 2009;
- Identify statewide capital investment priorities for acquiring, developing, and protecting outdoor recreation resources;
- Identify the State's priorities, strategies, and actions for the obligation of its LWCF apportionment; and
- Provide information that agencies and communities need to develop project proposals eligible for LWCF assistance.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCORP AND THE LWCF**

The federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended (P.L. 88-578), requires states to have an approved SCORP on file with the National Park Service in order to participate in the LWCF cost-share program. Through this program, federal LWCF dollars, generated by revenues from outer-continental-shelf oil drilling leases, may be used to finance eligible state and local government land acquisition and outdoor recreation programs.

An important determinant of a project's eligibility to receive LWCF assistance is that it meet a priority need or objective identified in the state's current SCORP. Since the program began in 1965, 379 Alaskan projects have received LWCF funding, resulting in the acquisition of more than 20,786 acres of park land and the development of nearly \$59.2 million in public recreation facilities.

## **ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES ROLE IN STATEWIDE RECREATION PLANNING**

The responsibility for outdoor recreation planning and administering the LWCF program resides with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, particularly with the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (Alaska State Parks). The Governor appointed the Alaska State Parks director as the State Liaison Officer, effective September 16, 2003. Alaska Statute 41.21.020 provides State Parks the legal authority to:

- Develop a continuing plan for conservation and maximum use in the public interest of the scenic, historic, archaeological, scientific, biological, and recreation resources of the state.
- Provide for consulting services designed to develop local park and recreation facilities and programs.
- Provide clearinghouse services for other state agencies concerned with park and recreation matters.

## **HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED**

Alaska State Parks is the lead agency for developing the SCORP.

The SCORP was developed between February 2004, and May 2004, by Alaska State Parks staff in cooperation with other local, state, and federal outdoor recreation professionals, interest groups, and the public.

To quantify what Alaskans currently do for recreation outdoors and to learn what opportunities they want in the future, 600 households throughout the state were surveyed by telephone in March 2004. Additionally, an informal inventory and survey of communities and recreation provider agencies was conducted to estimate the number of existing outdoor recreation facilities and to record recreation needs and issues.

Public participation by household was primarily through a mail out survey (sent to 1704 households with a return rate of 58% or 989 surveys), a statewide telephone survey, and an on-line survey (resulting in over 300 responses). In addition, five public meetings were held from Juneau to Fairbanks (see Appendix I). Government agencies, park and recreational user groups and the visitor industry were also consulted for review and update. Public comments were solicited and considered in the update process (see Appendix I). The wetlands component was updated and is consistent with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wetland programs and policies, prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game. It includes those wetlands that meet criteria for high recreation value wetlands.

## **HOW THE PLAN IS ORGANIZED**

Chapter 2 summarizes land ownership and demographic and economic patterns and trends within the state, and identifies planning regions.

Chapter 3 contains an estimate of the state's outdoor recreation resources and facilities.

Chapter 4 summarizes the results of the statewide and informal surveys to assess the outdoor recreation preferences of Alaska residents, the demand for future opportunities, and the level of support for proposals to meet the growing demand for facilities and programs during a period of declining recreation budgets.

Chapter 5 identifies critical statewide recreation issues and goals, and recommended actions to meet goals.

Chapter 6 summarizes the LWCF grant application process and schedule, and outlines priorities for LWCF project funding.

Chapter 7 discusses wetlands as important recreation lands and guides in identifying high recreation value wetlands that should receive priority attention for acquisition or other protective efforts.

Appendices include statewide telephone survey and comparison results, community mail out survey form, local recreation plan guidelines, public workshop and written comments, public review comments, and bibliography/information sources (including websites).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE: AN OVERVIEW

*"I like this country. I don't even want to go out, only to visit my folks once before they die. But I'd just as soon die here as anywhere. I'd keep better."  
(A miner on the Koyukuk River, quoted in Bob Marshall's Journal)*

### **THE LAND**

Alaska is famous for geographic excesses, foremost of which is its size. At 570,374 square miles, or approximately 366 million acres, it is the country's largest state, one-fifth the size of the continental United States. Alaskans like to brag that if their state were divided in half, Texas would be the nation's third largest state. Alaska has more miles of coastline than all of the continental states combined, the tallest mountain in North America (Mt. McKinley at 20,320 feet), more than 5,000 glaciers and over 20,000 square miles of inland water.

Positioned along the Pacific Rim, Alaska is a zone of geologic tension, where the Pacific and North American tectonic plates meet. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are reminders of Alaska's geologic youth, and the dynamic nature of the landscape. Here too, warm and cold seas, and Arctic and Pacific air masses meet. The result is climate extremes and volatile, often violent weather. The nation's lowest recorded temperature (-80 degrees Fahrenheit) was recorded in Alaska, and winds of 139 m.p.h. have been recorded on the Aleutian Islands. Alaskan summers are brief, relatively warm, wet, and dominated by the "midnight sun." Winters are long, cold, and dark.

The dynamics and extremes of the physical world are matched by a rich and diverse biota. Alaska contains flora and fauna of temperate, sub-arctic, and arctic types in a profusion of marine, inter-tidal, and terrestrial environments. Plant communities range from the towering temperate rainforest of Southeast Alaska to pioneering colonies of lichen and moss on rocky mountain slopes. Alaskan waters support rich fish and marine mammal populations. Migrant birds from many continents breed here, herds of caribou thunder across the arctic plain, and bears crowd the edges of salmon-rich streams.

### **LAND OWNERSHIP**

Land ownership in Alaska is complex and in transition (see "Generalized Land Ownership," Map 2.1). Under terms of the 1959 Alaska Statehood Act, the State of Alaska is authorized to receive over 103 million acres of land from the federal government. To date, the State has received about 89.5 million acres of this land.

The estimated total of Alaska tidal shoreline, including islands, inlets and shoreline to head of tidewater is 47,300 miles. The Alaska Statehood Act granted the state ownership of submerged lands under most navigable waterways and submerged lands up to three miles

offshore. Which rivers and lakes are navigable and where the offshore boundaries fall is still being debated between the State of Alaska and the Federal Government.

Signed into law in 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) won a unique settlement from the United States for Alaska's Native population. The act extinguished aboriginal land claims, provided for formation of 13 regional, 4 urban, and 200 village Native corporations, and transfer of 44 million acres of land from federal to Native corporation ownership.

State and ANCSA conveyances have not been completed. The federal government (Bureau of Land Management) owes ANCSA corporations about 9 million acres and owes the State about 16 million acres. Many of these remaining claims are in conflict and will require many years to resolve. Various selections cannot be completed until actual land surveys are done, which will also take many years.

Upon completion of the conveyance process, the state's largest landowner will remain the federal government, with about 220 million acres or 60 percent of Alaska. The State will own 28 percent, Native corporations 11 percent, private (non-Native) one percent, and municipalities, less than one percent.

## **POPULATION**

Despite its size, Alaska is the second smallest state in the country by population; with 1.1 people per square mile (U.S. average is 81 people per square mile). The highest density is in the Anchorage area: about 158 persons per square mile.

While Alaska has less than one percent of the population of the United States, between 1958 and 1996 its population tripled. Between 1990 and 2000, the population increased 14 percent. According to 2000 census figures, Alaska's population was 626,932 a gain of almost 77,000. There are over 221,000 households. The growth rate has slowed fairly steadily from a high of 3.1 percent in 1991-92 to about 1.5 percent annually since 1990. Alaska's population is increasing more slowly and is getting slightly older than before.

Total gross migration for the year 2000 was 13.2 percent. Gross migration is the total volume of migration to and from the state that occurs in a year. 1,120 more people migrated out of Alaska than the 43,413 that migrated in. The largest population change in Alaska is births that increased by a margin of three to one. Populations have decreased in the Aleutians, Bristol Bay, Wrangell-Petersburg, and Ketchikan areas following the closure of several military bases and a decline in the timber and salmon industries.

Seventy-five percent of all Alaska's growth between 2000 and 2002 occurred in four areas of the state. The Municipality of Anchorage had the largest increase by 8,787; second was the Matanuska-Susutina Borough by 5,919. Fairbanks North Star Borough and Kenai Peninsula Borough grew by 1,951 and 1,496 respectively. Anchorage, the state's largest city, gained just more than 33,945 new residents from 1990 to 2000. Mat-Su is the state's fastest growing area with a 6 percent population increase in the past year.

The areas with the greatest net loss in population between 1990 and 2000 were the Aleutians West Census Area (-4,013) and the Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area (-1,968). Four additional areas: Wrangell-Petersburg (-358), Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon (-244), Bristol Bay Borough (-152) and Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan Census Area (-121) had smaller population losses.

## **THE PEOPLE**

Alaska's people represent widely varied ethnic, cultural, international, and geographic diversity. Indigenous groups and migration to the state account for this diversity. Most Alaskans live in villages, towns, cities, or clustered settlements, with diversity represented throughout the state.

The median age in Alaska in 2000 was 32.4 years, up from 30.9 in 1996. The United States median age is currently 35.4. Nearly 34 percent of the population was between the ages of 25 and 44; and 5.8 percent of the population was over 65, significantly higher than the 4.9 percent proportion in 1990. It appears that Alaska is following the nationwide trend of older persons representing an increasingly greater share of population.

The Alaska Native population is younger than the general state population. More than 44 percent of Alaska Natives are under 18, compared with 33 percent among all residents. Young adults will be the fastest growing segment of the Alaska Native population. Females comprised 49 percent of the population; men 51 percent. While nationwide, Alaska Natives and American Indians comprise 1.5 percent of the total population, 15.6 percent of all Alaskans are Natives. Native Alaskans include Aleuts, Inupiaq and Yu'pik Eskimos, and Athabascan, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian Indians.

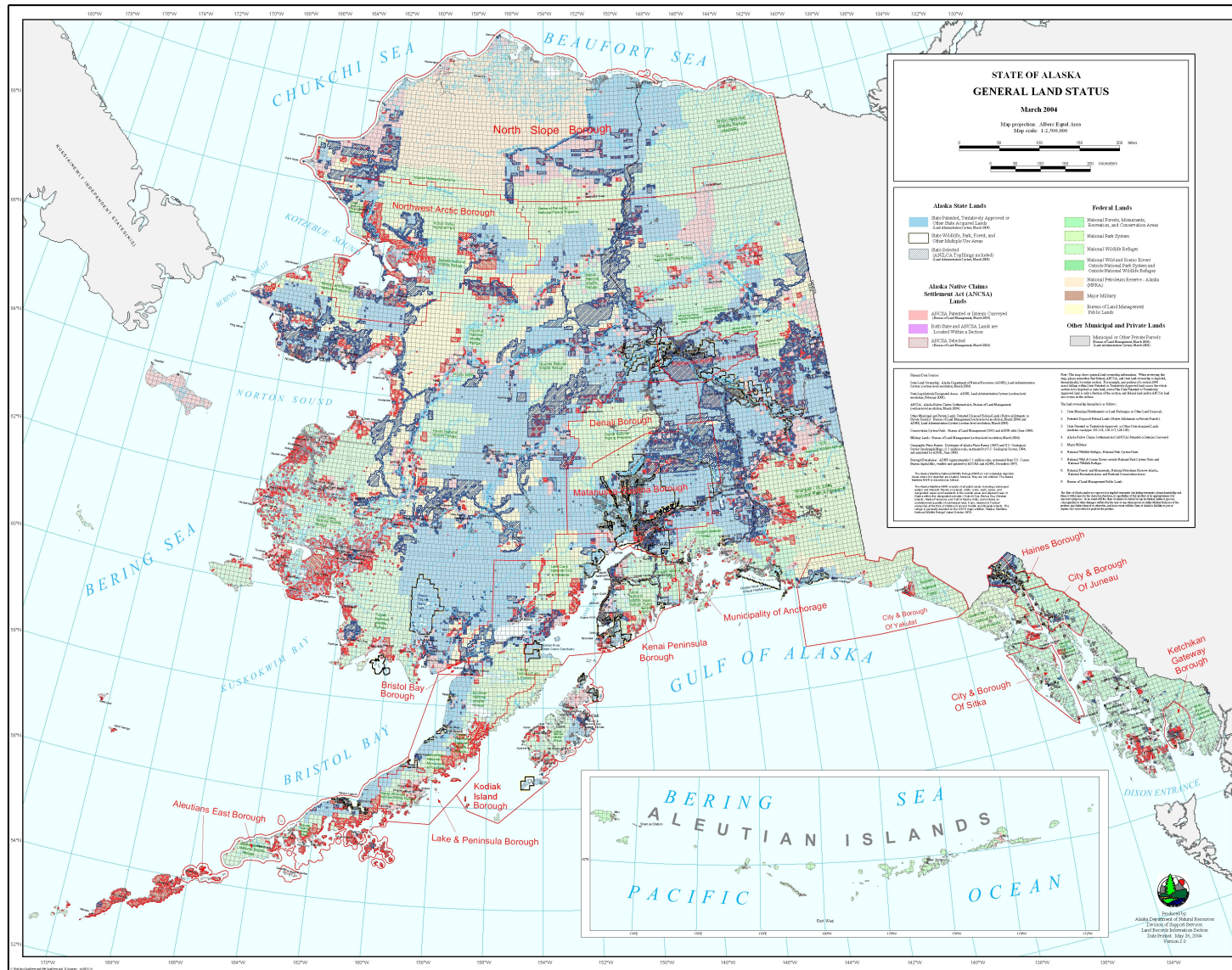
Prior to this century, Native culture dominated Alaska. However, between 1890 and 1900, the gold rush brought the first great influx of non-Natives. In those 10 years, the total population doubled, with a sevenfold increase in non-Native peoples. The economic boom in the early 1980s led to a large in-migration of non-Natives. Today, Alaska Native cultures dominate in the northern and southwestern regions of the state, particularly in the Wade-Hampton census area (Kotlik to Hooper Bay west to Russian Mission) region, where Alaska Natives comprise almost 92 percent of the population.

Figure 2.1 Race Composition in Alaska, July 2000

Caucasian	69.3%
Alaska Native	15.6%
African American	3.5%
Asian/Pacific	4.5%
Some other race	1.5%
Two or more races	5.6%

Note: Persons of Hispanic origin comprise 4.1 percent of the population and may be of any race.

MAP 2.1 GENERALIZED LAND OWNERSHIP



[http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/kodiak/gis/raster/map\\_library/y2004/Iris/LandStatus.jpg](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/kodiak/gis/raster/map_library/y2004/Iris/LandStatus.jpg)



## **WHERE PEOPLE LIVE**

60 percent of Alaska is owned by the Federal Government, 28 percent is owned by the State and 11 percent is owned by Native Corporations. Because much of Alaska is in federal or state ownership, most Alaskans live in cities, towns, villages, or clustered settlements. Just over 77 percent of Alaska's population in 2000 was contained in the following five boroughs: Anchorage, Fairbanks North Star, Matanuska-Susitna, Kenai Peninsula, and Juneau.

Alaska is not divided into counties. As of July 2002, the chief units of local government were 13 organized boroughs, 3 unified home-rule municipalities (combining the functions of boroughs and cities), and 149 incorporated cities (19 are considered urban, i.e., populations of 2,500 or greater, 8 have a population between 1,000 and 2,500). Approximately 62.7 percent of Alaskans live in urban settings. Forty-two percent of all Alaskans live in the Municipality of Anchorage. 3.2 percent of the state population lives in an unorganized territory. Alaska has 211 Native Villages.

## **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

From now until the year 2020, Alaska expects much slower growth in population. Increases will likely average around 1.4 percent annually over the next 16 years, most of which will be from natural births minus deaths rather than migration. Based on what is known right now, Alaska's population in 2020 will most likely be about 25 percent larger than it is today. The most noticeable population growth during the next 21 years will be that of Alaska's seniors (+65 and older). This group is currently increasing at about four percent annually. The rate of growth for this group is expected to increase to 5.0-6.5 percent annually from 2005 through 2020. Senior facilities and services will need to expand in the future to match the aging Alaska population.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED ECONOMY**

Alaska's natural resource wealth is in the form of oil and gas resources, viewing scenic beauty, wilderness, fisheries, wildlife, timber, hard rock minerals, clean air and water, and arable land. Foremost in economic importance is oil, followed by tourism, seafood, mining, and timber (forest products).

## **OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

Alaska oil production is about half the peak volume of two million barrels per day in 1988. Despite growing oil prices, the production decline has had a major impact on the Alaskan economy. To offset the decline, the state is encouraging exploration in new areas of Alaska. In fiscal year 2003, the oil and gas industry generated almost \$2.1 billion in revenue to the State of Alaska in royalties, rental, and severance taxes. 84 percent of all unrestricted State General Funds came from oil revenue.

## **TOURISM/VISITOR INDUSTRY**

Marketing Alaska's scenery, fish, wildlife, outdoor recreation, and cultural resources to visitors is a major component of the Alaskan economy. In 2003, more than 1.31 million out-of-state tourist visited Alaska, spending over 2.4 billion in gross sales. Tourism is the state's 2nd largest private sector employer, employing over 27,000 persons during the peak season. Tourism has moved from 7<sup>th</sup> largest private sector employer to 2<sup>nd</sup> since the development of the last SCORP. 60 percent of the tourist dollar went to hotels and lodging. 19 percent went to amusement and recreation services. The industry recognizes the importance of visitor infrastructure and is working to develop new attractions in the state. The major growth in tourism is attributed to the cruise sector. It is estimated that cruise ship traffic grew by 6.9 percent in 2003 and is expected to grow another 5 percent or more over the next two years. Airline traffic is expected to remain steady with a decline in ferry and highway travel.

## **SEAFOOD INDUSTRY**

Approximately 2.0 million metric tons of fish and shellfish were harvested in 2002 but global competition has devalued the Alaskan seafood market. Fishing is important in coastal towns throughout Alaska. The 2002 annual average seafood employment was nearly 22,000. This is largely a seasonal industry; many workers are non-residents. To keep the Alaska Seafood industry profitable, Alaskans must diversify and fish quality be improved.

## **MINING**

In 2003, Alaska's total mineral production was valued at \$980 million, including gold, silver, lead, zinc, tin, coal, and industrial minerals. The industry employs the equivalent of about 2,400 full-time jobs. The discovery of the Pebble porphyry gold deposit across Cook Inlet near Lake Iliamna was announced in the spring of 2004. The deposit is thought to contain 26.5 million ounces of gold and 16.5 billion pounds of copper which could be the largest known gold deposit and second-largest copper deposit in North America. The mine is estimated to employ 2,000 workers when operational.

## **FOREST PRODUCTS**

Alaska's total timber harvest in 2002 was 63 million board feet. The declining demand in Asia for wood products, the pulp mills in Sitka and Ketchikan closing in 1993 and 1997, respectively, and The Tongass Land Use Management Plan reducing annual allowable harvest has contributed to the contraction of the timber industry. The U.S. Forest Service initiating 10 year timber sales in Southeast Alaska, the opening of a veneer mill in Ketchikan and the creation of a new 1.7 million acre State Forest from the existing Tongass National Forest are expected to increase the timber outlook in Alaska.

## **ECONOMIC OUTLOOK**

Economic trends have various implications for recreation demand and for soliciting financial support for providing recreation.

While Alaska will continue to have a resource based economy, the health of each resource sector cannot be easily predicted. Alaska faces challenges as it works to strengthen and diversify its economy. Alaska's industries are generally controlled by non-Alaskan companies, and are therefore, heavily dependent on decisions made in broad national or world markets. Foremost in importance to Alaska's economic health and stability is the future expansion of the economic base such as hard rock mining, air cargo, trade along the Pacific Rim, tourism, medical services, and federally-funded construction projects.

The Tongass Land Management Plan Revision process has been completed. The U.S. Forest Service decided there will be no further wilderness additions to the Tongass National Forest. Alaska is hopeful it will facilitate the re-growth of Southeast Alaska's forest product industry.

Timber industry interests contend the U.S. Forest Service's preferred alternative will not provide enough timber to meet the needs of the existing industry, while other forest users contend that harvest levels must drop lower to protect fish and wildlife resources. The Interior boreal forests have tremendous potential for future value-added processing. Alaska has some of the largest, potentially commercial hardwood stands in the world. However, fragmented land ownership, high transportation costs, high capital investment, and political opposition have slowed the development of this resource.

The mineral industry will continue to play a significant role in the state's economy.

In the fishing industry, competition from farmed seafood and from unexploited stocks (such as those in Siberia) could continue to reduce the value of Alaska stocks.

Alaska is a major travel destination competing with top destinations around the world and the demand for access to Alaska's scenic and recreation resources is expected to continue to grow. Of all Alaska's industries, tourism may have the most potential for growth.

## **AREAS**

Alaska is divided into three regions, based primarily on settlement and lifestyle patterns. They are Southeast, Railbelt, and Rural Alaska, i.e., off the established road

### **Southeast**

Southeast Alaska is characterized by lush, temperate rainforests of old growth hemlock and Sitka spruce at the base of rugged, glaciated peaks, and thousands of miles of coastline

convoluted by fjords, inlets, and islands. Areas suitable for community and recreational development are limited and confined to narrow strips of coastal plains and lowlands. Southeast is home to twelve percent of Alaska's population.

### **Railbelt**

Railbelt includes those urban and rural communities accessible from Alaska's limited road and rail system, generally from the southern end of the Kenai Peninsula, north to Fairbanks, and east to the Canadian border. This encompasses a large and diverse geographic area.

The central coastal area is similar in topography to the southeast region. Developable lowlands and plains have been utilized wherever possible. Prominent features include the Kenai, Chugach, and Wrangell mountains along the coast, and the fertile Matanuska and Susitna river valleys inland. Following the road system north and east, the landscape includes the high peaks of the Alaska Range (including Mt. McKinley), rolling hills, and broad river deltas. Seventy-three percent of Alaskans live in the railbelt region.

### **Rural**

Rural Alaska is also a large and geographically diverse area. Its topography includes features similar to inland railbelt areas, as well as the extensive wetlands of the northern coastal plain and Yukon and Kuskokwim river deltas, and the windswept Aleutian peninsula and archipelago. The maritime influence of the Arctic Ocean, Bering Sea, and Pacific Ocean predominates. It is the most sparsely populated and largest of the regions, and includes the highest percentage of Alaska Natives. Fifteen percent of Alaska's population lives in the rural region.

## CHAPTER 3

### ALASKA'S RECREATION RESOURCES

*"If bread is the first necessity of life, recreation is a close second."*  
-Edward Bellamy

Alaskans generally participate in two broad categories of outdoor recreation: "wildland" or resource-based recreation, and community-based recreation.

#### **WILDLANDS RECREATION**

Love of the outdoors is a major part of the fabled "Alaskan lifestyle." Wildland recreation in Alaska includes a wide spectrum of popular activities, from fishing, hunting, hiking, skiing, bird watching, snowmobiling, ORV riding, wildlife viewing, recreational mining, to mountaineering, whitewater rafting, spelunking, dog mushing, ocean kayaking, and power boating.

In addition to recreation values, wildlands play an increasingly important role in the economy of Alaska. As the demand for outdoor-related recreation and tourism expands, the value of accessible public wildlands (and surrounding private land) grows. Wildlands also play an important role in environmental education programs for all ages, therapeutic programs for the physically challenged, and self-esteem and wilderness skills workshops for troubled youths.

These kinds of opportunities are found on large private land holdings, and on open space and public access to lands in public ownership. Alaska contains a generous supply of public land, but access can be difficult or limited by land ownership, geography, and distance.

#### **LANDS DESIGNATED FOR WILDLAND RECREATION**

While most of Alaska's 322 million acres of public lands are available for recreation, about 168 million acres, or 46 percent of Alaska, is managed for wildland recreation. Sixty percent of America's national park acreage, the country's largest state park system, and the nation's two largest national forests (the Tongass in Southeast with 17 million acres, and Chugach in Southcentral with 5.7 million acres) though not managed exclusively for recreation, are located in Alaska.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) placed large parts of Alaska in the nation's conservation, wilderness, and recreation systems, wild and scenic rivers, forests, wildlife refuges, and parks. Combined with the older federal reserves and an expanding state park system, these designations create opportunities for outdoor recreation unsurpassed anywhere.

Twenty-five Alaskan rivers and over 3,200 river miles are protected under the National Wild and Scenic River designation. Additionally, there are six legislatively designated State Recreation Rivers, encompassing 460 river miles and 260,000 upland acres.

Approximately 12 percent of state land is under some form of legislative designation that protects or enhances wildland recreation. Approximately 82.4 million acres of federal land and 400,000 acres of state land are designated as wilderness.

Alaska's state parks are the primary roadside gateways to outdoor recreation.

In addition, millions of acres of general state-owned land (managed by the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water) and federal domain land (managed by the Bureau of Land Management) are open to wildland recreation. These lands are becoming increasingly popular. There are few regulations imposed on users of these lands. The State also owns about 65 million acres of tidelands, coastal submerged lands, and lands under navigable waters, all having virtually unlimited potential for wildland recreation.

Figure 3.1 - Wildland Recreation Lands & Agencies

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>ACRES (Millions)</b>	<b>UNITS</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
<b>US Fish &amp; Wildlife Service</b>	76.8	43	16 wildlife refuges (compatible recreation allowed); 6 National Wild & Scenic Rivers; 21 wilderness areas
<b>National Park Service</b>	54.7	35	15 parks, preserves and monuments; 13 National Wild & Scenic Rivers; 7 wilderness areas
<b>US Forest Service</b>	22.8	21	2 National forests; 19 wilderness areas
<b>Alaska State Parks</b>	3.2	119	Historic parks, recreation sites, parks, marine parks; state trail systems; public use facilities; preserve; special management areas
<b>Alaska Division of Land</b>	2.6	12	4 public use areas; 6 state recreational rivers; 2 recreational mining sites
<b>Alaska Department of Fish &amp; Game</b>	3.2	50	17 critical habitat areas; 10 game refuges (compatible recreation allowed); 3 sanctuaries; 18 access sites; 2 range areas
<b>US Bureau of Land Management</b>	2.7	9	2 land units; 6 National Wild & Scenic Rivers; 1 historic trail
<b>Alaska Division of Forestry</b>	2.1	2	2 state forests
<b>TOTAL</b>	168.1	291	

## **AREAS**

- **Southeast**

Most of Alaska's southeast region is encompassed by the Tongass National Forest (17 million acres), administered by the U.S. Forest Service. The National Park Service manages 3.3 million acres and three park units. Alaska State Parks manages about 80,000 acres and 34 park units, including 16 marine parks. The Department of Fish and Game manages two state wildlife refuges, two critical habitat areas, and a wildlife sanctuary in Southeast Alaska. The Alaska Division of Forestry manages 247,000 acres in the Haines State Forest.

- **Railbelt**

Because of the region's urban population and developed road system, the railbelt is home to many wildland recreation users and contains many popular destinations. It also contains half of the state's most-visited attractions.

The bulk of the state park system acreage and units (78 units, including 19 marine parks) lie within the railbelt region including Chugach, Denali, and Kachemak Bay state parks. Additionally, nearly 20 million acres of national park land, including Kenai Fjords National Park, Denali National Park and Preserve, and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, the 1.9 million-acre Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, the 5.7 million acre Chugach National Forest, and 16 state special areas (critical habitat areas, sanctuaries, and refuges) are located within this region. The Tanana Valley State Forest has 1.8 million acres.

- **Rural**

Most of the public lands available for wildland recreation in rural Alaska are part of the national wildlife refuge system. Approximately 73.5 million acres, or 95 percent, of Alaska's national wildlife refuge acreage, and nine of Alaska's 15 national parks are located in rural Alaska. The nation's largest state park, Wood-Tikchik State Park (1.6 million acres), and 6 other state parks are also found in this region. The Department of Fish and Game manages 10 special areas in rural Alaska, including the McNeil River and Walrus Island sanctuaries. Native corporation lands, scattered throughout the state but primarily in rural areas, are privately owned land and not generally accessible to the general public without permission.

## **WILDLAND RECREATION FACILITIES**

Despite this abundance of high value recreation lands, some wildland recreation opportunities are in short supply. Facilities such as campgrounds, trails, trailheads, cabins, boat launches, and other facilities are often the critical link between users and otherwise "wild" and inaccessible lands, especially along the road system and in the railbelt region. In many parts of the state, facilities, even if primitive or limited in number, make the difference between a potential outdoor experience and reality.

The last comprehensive inventory of Alaska's recreation facilities was included in the 1997-2002 SCORP. The following charts contain updated estimates based on inquiries and research during the spring of 2004. Note that these are estimates only. Contact agency land managers for specific information.

Much of Alaska's premier wildland recreation resources (particularly in the southeast and rural regions) are accessible only by plane or boat. Additionally, not all activities are allowed in all areas, i.e. agencies have missions to manage for different opportunities and may restrict or prohibit some uses. This places a heavy burden on road accessible and railbelt facilities. They are often filled to capacity. Construction of new or expanded facilities is expensive and often creates more demand, attracting more users. Consequently, facility demand continues to exceed facility supply throughout most of the state.

Despite its relatively small land holding (by Alaska standards), Alaska State Parks is the largest state park system in America. It ranks 35<sup>th</sup> in visitation, and is the State's largest provider of wildland recreation facilities. In 2003, because of their proximity to roads and urban centers, state park units hosted 3 times the visitation of Alaska's national parks. From July 02-June 03, Alaska State Parks had over 4,300,000 visitors. Additionally, state parks and facilities often serve as community recreation areas for residents of the larger urban areas. Forty-six percent of public land campgrounds in the state are Alaska State Park campgrounds.

Figure 3.2 - Developed Wildland Recreation Facilities (numbers in parentheses indicate disabled accessible facilities) - 2003 estimates. Note that numbers are for specifically developed and maintained facilities and not all agencies submitted numbers.

Agency	AK State Parks	US Fish & Wildlife	Bureau of Land Mgmt.	National Park Service	US Forest Service	AK Dept Fish & Game
<b>Campgrounds campsites</b>	66 1,864(35)	12 160	8 160	24 (5) 345 (43)	15 354	4 100
<b>Public cabins shelters</b>	62(6) 31	8 (2)	13	190 29 (1)	42	
<b>Visitor centers</b>	5 (5)	8 (7)	3	23*(23)	5	1
<b>Boat launches/ docks/ramps</b>	29(4)	8 (1)	3	4 (1)		
<b>Wildlife viewing/ interpretation</b>	12 (4) 4 (4)	68 (15)		15 (14)		
<b># of trails</b>	67(6)	35 (4)	30	47 (4)	37	
<b># of trails maintained in summer</b>	54	3	30	47(4)	37	
<b># of trails maintained in winter</b>	14	2	9	4	2	



Figure 3.2 - Developed Wildland Recreation Facilities Cont.

Agency	AK State Parks	US Fish & Wildlife	Bureau of Land Mgmt.	National Park Service	US Forest Service	AK Dept Fish & Game
Miles of trails motorized	115	130	136	8.5		20
Miles of trails non-motorized	427	412	118	66.75	231.18	10
# of trailheads	37	2	4	17 (6)		
# of trailheads maintained in winter	12	2	3	15		
# of trailheads maintained in summer	37	2	3	5		

\* Includes 4 Alaska Public Lands Information Centers (Anchorage, Fairbanks, Tok, Ketchikan), 1 shared with US Forest Service (Ketchikan), 1 State of Alaska (Tok). All disabled accessible.

US Fish and Wildlife Services also reports 42 miles of refuge roads, 500 miles of marine highway, and 500 miles of canoe trails. In addition, Alaska has thousands of miles of un-maintained trails.

### **ROADS AS OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES**

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT/PF) is also one of the most important providers of recreation within the state. Alaskans rely on roads for a broad spectrum of recreational opportunities. Alaska has over 13,250 miles of public roads, approximately 26 percent (or 3,500 miles) of which are paved. Most recreation occurs along, or is accessed from the road system. Viewing wildlife and scenery from vehicles and bicycling along the road are important components of the state's tourism industry, as well as resident recreation.

In addition, this department oversees the Alaska Marine Highway System, with 3,500 miles of saltwater ferry routes, which also play an important part in Alaska recreation. Ferries operate year round and provide transportation, lodging, and food. Ferry service levels are highest during the summer.

### **COMMUNITY RECREATION**

Community recreation fills a very different niche for Alaskans and plays an important role in serving daily recreation needs. Community recreation is often family or school-oriented and includes a wide spectrum of activities, including outdoor court and field sports (e.g.,

tennis, basketball, softball, soccer, open field activities), golf, hockey or ice skating, alpine skiing, picnic and playground activities, outdoor target shooting (archery, pistol, etc.) and trail-related activities, such as bicycling, snowmobiling, equestrian sports, cross country skiing, jogging, and walking for fitness.

Community recreation plays an important role in Alaska's urban areas. It is especially meaningful in smaller and rural communities where leisure time programs are in short supply. In many of Alaska's primarily Native communities, activities often associated with recreation, such as hunting, trapping, fishing, or berry picking, are important subsistence activities, often undertaken more for economic or cultural reasons, rather than for recreation value.

### **COMMUNITY RECREATION LAND**

The following chart shows an updated estimate of public community recreation lands in Alaska, based on the 1997SCORP and updated information from communities and boroughs.

The Municipality of Anchorage, with 42 percent of the state's population, manages approximately 14,000 acres of park land (nearly 50 percent of the state's total community park lands). The North Star Borough reports nearly 4,000 acres of dedicated park land, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, 2,120 dedicated park acres.

Figure 3.3 - Community Recreation Land

<b>Region</b>	<b>Estimated acres</b>	<b>% of total municipal park acreage</b>	<b>% of state population</b>
<b>Southeast</b>	3,500	11.6	12
<b>Railbelt</b>	24,230	80.1	73
<b>Rural</b>	2,500	8.3	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	30,230	100	100

Though many rural communities (often surrounded by wildlands) report they have no community park lands, numbers indicate that park land acreage for each region mirrors regional population percentages. This is consistent with the results of the informal statewide survey of community recreation providers conducted by Alaska State Parks in the spring of 2004. Respondents from each region generally report their greatest outdoor recreation needs are for facilities, not land. (See Chapter 4 for more information on outdoor recreation needs and priorities.)

## **COMMUNITY RECREATION FACILITIES**

As part of the same survey, community recreation providers were asked to complete a facility inventory form. Statewide, the response rate was approximately 18 percent. Possible reasons for not responding include reduced staff time, the fact that many communities and boroughs do not have recreation powers or authority, and that many communities have no facilities to report. Survey results provide insights into relative supply of facilities.

According to results of the spring 2004 community provider mail out survey, most of the state's community outdoor recreation facilities are located in the railbelt, followed by southeast, then rural.

## CHAPTER 4

### OUTDOOR RECREATION PATTERNS, TRENDS, AND NEEDS

***“I have laid aside business, and gone a-fishing.”***  
***-Izaak Walton***

To identify what Alaskans currently do for outdoor recreation and what opportunities are desired for the future, Alaska State Parks conducted a telephone survey during March 2004, collected mail out survey information from recreation providers in spring 2004, and held 5 community workshops throughout the state (see Appendix F for workshop summaries).

Through a contract with an Alaskan research firm, 600 households throughout the state were contacted and surveyed by telephone. Respondents were questioned about their outdoor recreation activities and preferences, and their attitudes towards revenue generating programs to fund recreation facilities and programs.

In addition to recording public opinion at five community workshops, Alaska State Parks mailed a survey form to each of Alaska's local government units. The survey asked outdoor recreation providers to identify the most significant outdoor recreation needs of their community and regional area (see Appendix B for a copy of the form).

Statewide household results, comparison of 1992 and 1997 outdoor recreation patterns, and workshop comments are included in the appendices.

#### **RESIDENT HOUSEHOLD SURVEY RESULTS**

Six hundred (600) households, with equal numbers from each of the three regions, were randomly selected and interviewed by telephone. To be eligible to participate in the survey, respondents had to be at least 18 years old and a legal resident of Alaska. The average age of respondents was 46.5 years old. See Appendix A for the survey questionnaire.

Nine hundred ninety-two (992) mail out surveys and three hundred thirty-two (332) on-line surveys were received from households. The response rates were 92% from the Railbelt region, 4% response from the Southeast region and a 3% response from the Rural region. Males made up 62% of the responses while females made up 37%. The average age of respondents was 48.1 years old.

## **VALUE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION TO ALASKANS**

Alaskans place a high value on the availability and quality of outdoor recreation opportunities: 98 percent of all respondents said parks and outdoor recreation were important or very important to their lifestyle.

The Alaska Recreation and Park Association recognizes four areas of recreation benefits that enhance quality of life: personal (such as fitness, relaxation, leisure, play); social (including community recreation that builds strong families and communities, promotes healthy social behaviors and ethnic and cultural harmony); economic (investment in recreation positively affects businesses, visitor industry, and a fit populace who then are more productive in the workplace); and environmental (environmental health, protection, and insurance for the future).

Alaskans demonstrate these values and benefits by their willingness to purchase outdoor recreation equipment (see Figure 4.1 in this chapter).

## **WHAT ALASKANS DO FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION**

Respondents were asked if they participated in any of 38 different outdoor recreation activities during the 12 month period prior to the survey, and if so, how many times. (Because the duration of each experience wasn't asked, the number of times should not be interpreted as number of days. However, for some activities, such as walking, sledding, or court games, this is probably a correct assumption.)

Based on the percent of the population reporting participation in the activity at least once during the previous year, the ten most popular outdoor recreation activities in 2004 are identified in the figures in this chapter:

Figure 4.1 – Recreational Equipment Ownership 2004

Figure 4.2 – Top 10 Participation Activities

Figure 4.3 – Top 10 Activities Available in Communities

Figure 4.4 – Top 10 Activities Available Within an Hour

Figure 4.5 – Top 10 Activities Available More than an Hour Away

Figure 4.6 – Top 10 Overall Favorite Activities

Figure 4.7 – How Far for Favorite Activities

Based on the percent of the population engaged in the activity and the average number of times of participation in each activity, figures were weighted to more accurately reflect overall participation rates.

## **PROXIMITY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES TO HOME**

Respondents were asked about where (in relation to their community) they usually recreated, i.e. within the community, within an hour's travel time, or farther than an hour.

In general, walking the dog, walking for fitness, court games, roller blading or skate boarding, and jogging or running occur most often within communities. Most downhill and backcountry skiing, day hiking and rock climbing occurs within an hour's traveling time from the community. The majority of kayaking, RV and tent camping (in a campground), back packing, clamming, sport hunting and fishing opportunities occur more than an hour away from home.

## **SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES**

The majority of respondents report general satisfaction with the outdoor recreation opportunities in their community, and within an hour's travel time (78 percent and 77 percent, respectively).

Figure 4.1- Recreational Equipment Ownership 2004

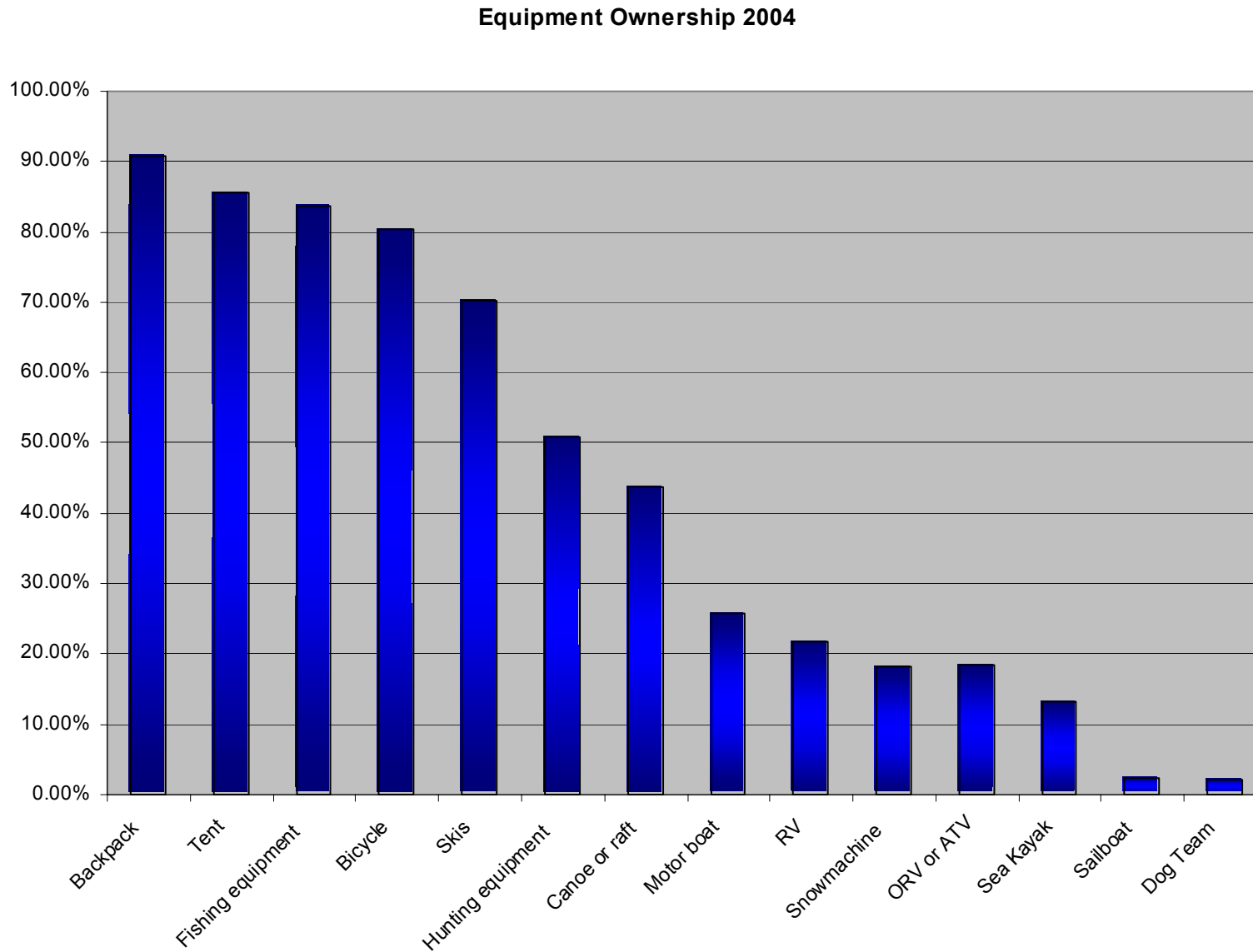


Figure 4.2 – Top 10 Participation Activities

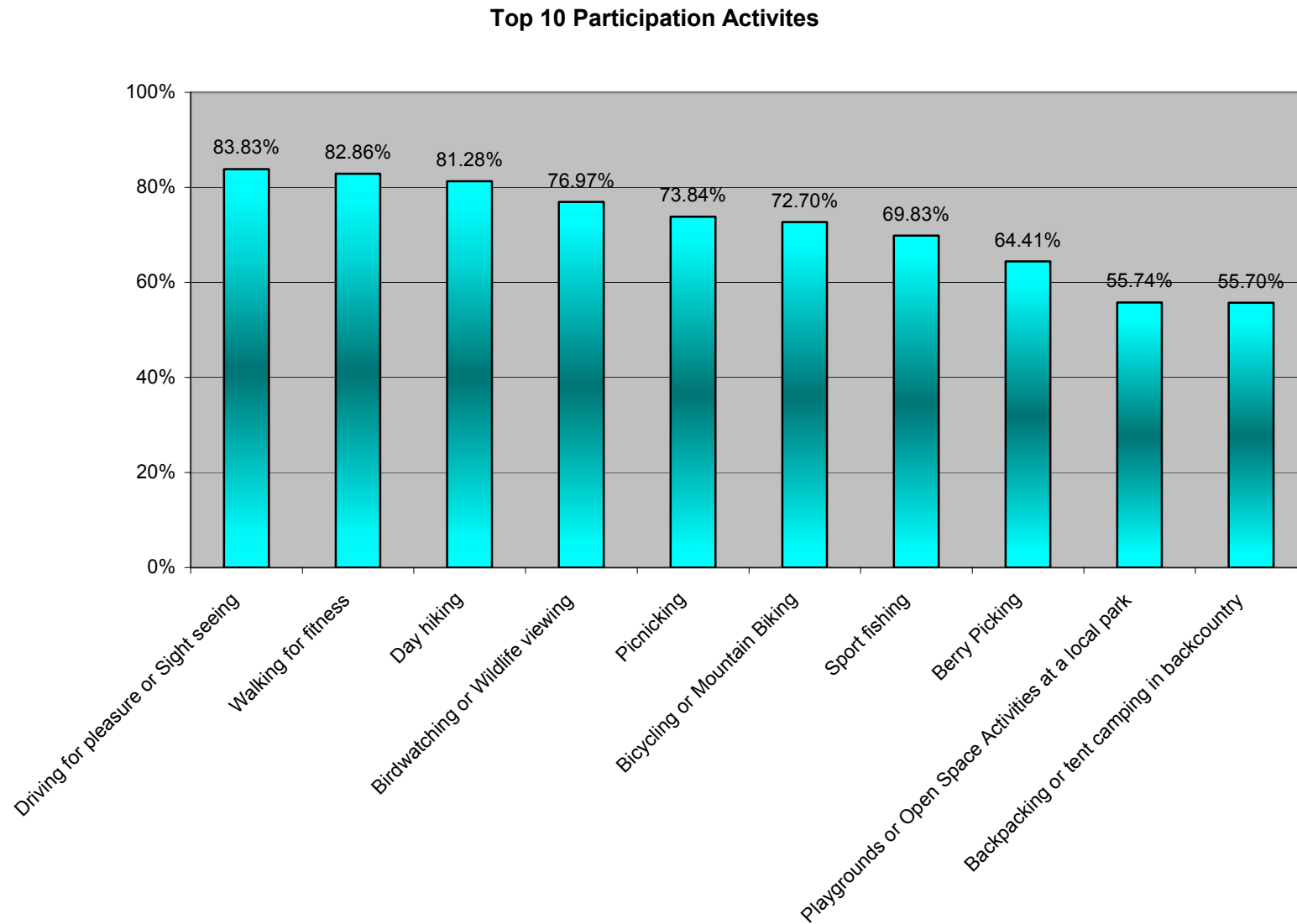




Figure 4.3 – Top 10 Activities Available in Communities

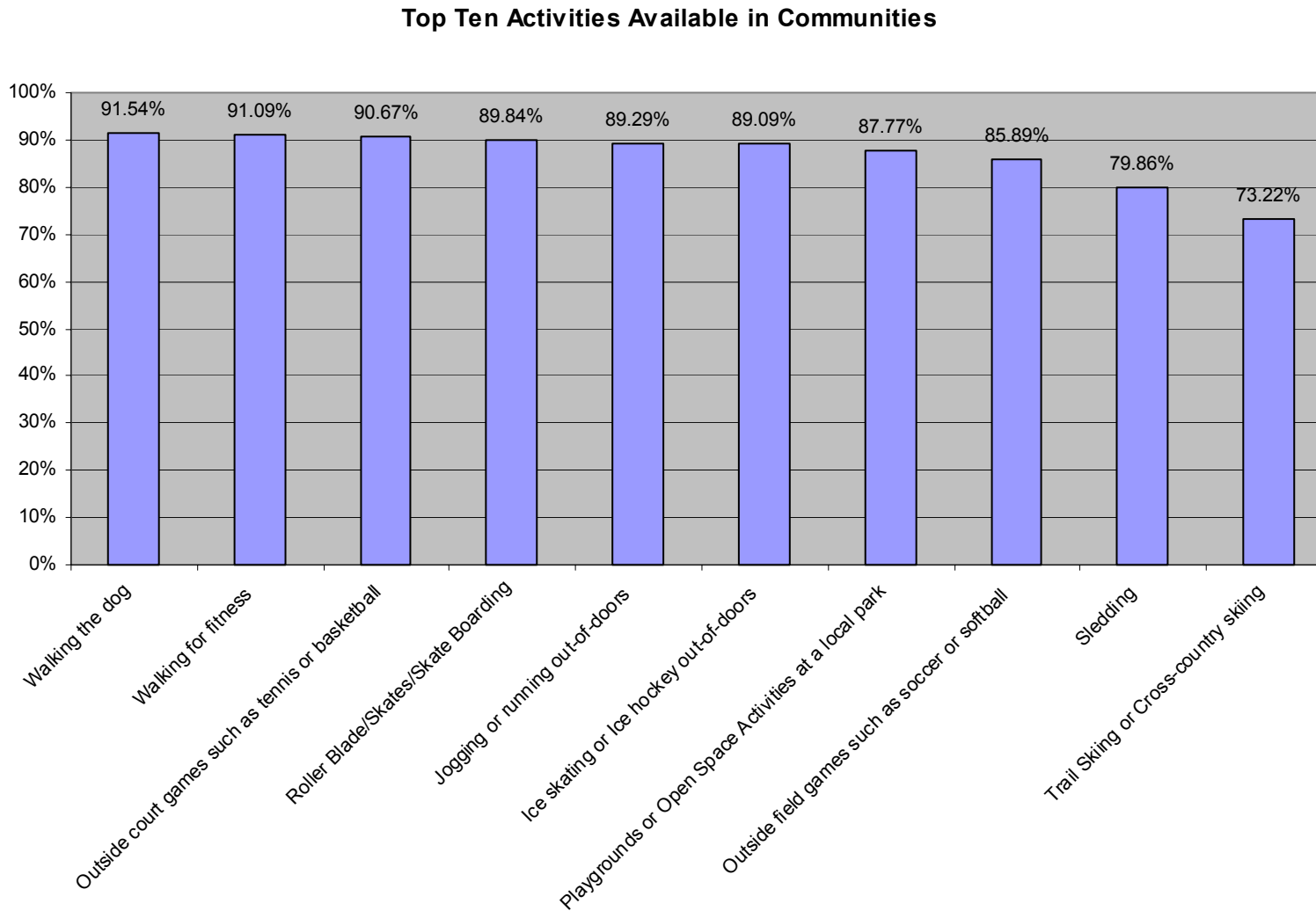


Figure 4.4 – Top 10 Activities Available within an Hour

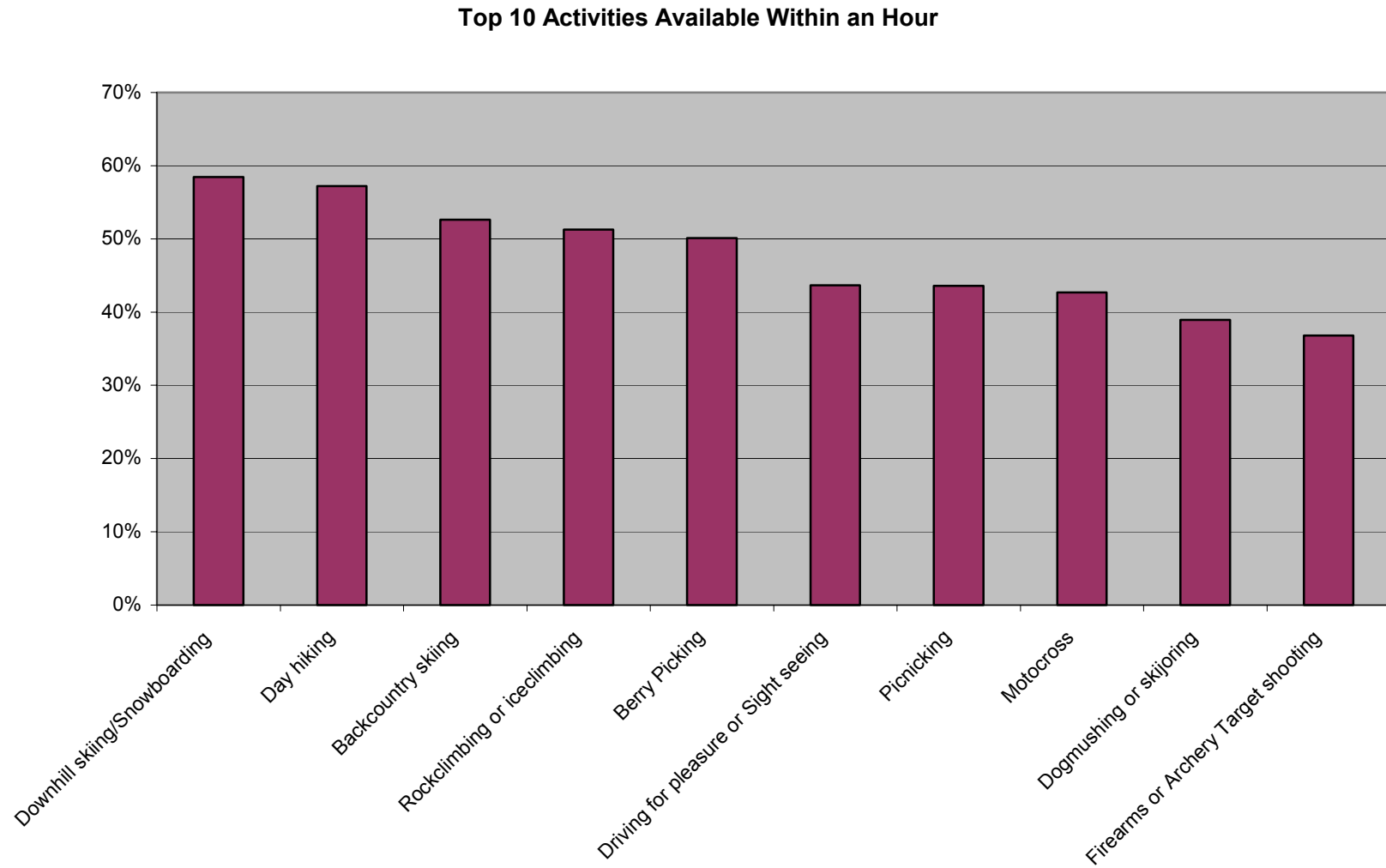


Figure 4.5 – Top 10 Activities Available More Than an Hour Away

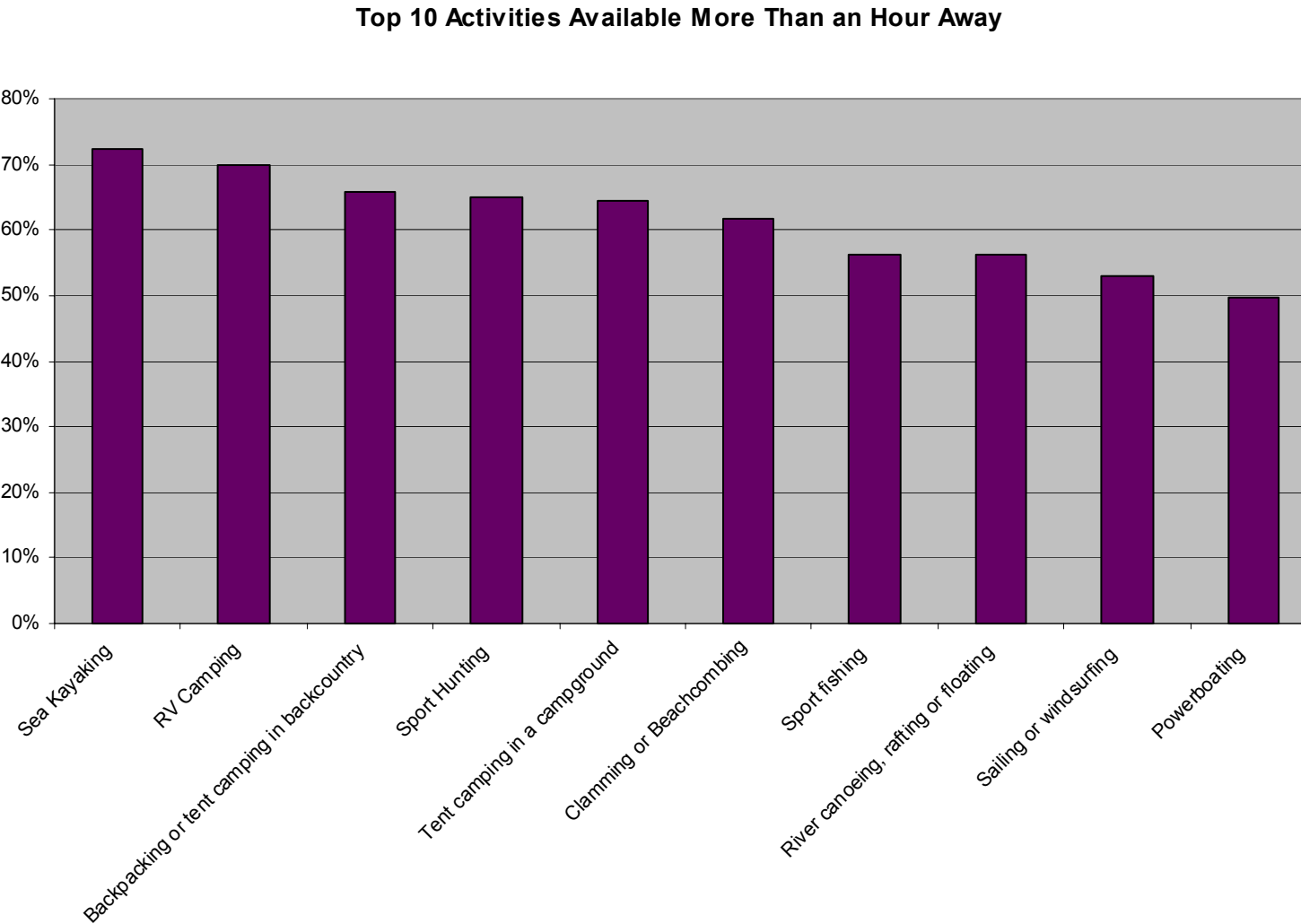


Figure 4.6 – Top 10 Overall Favorite Activities

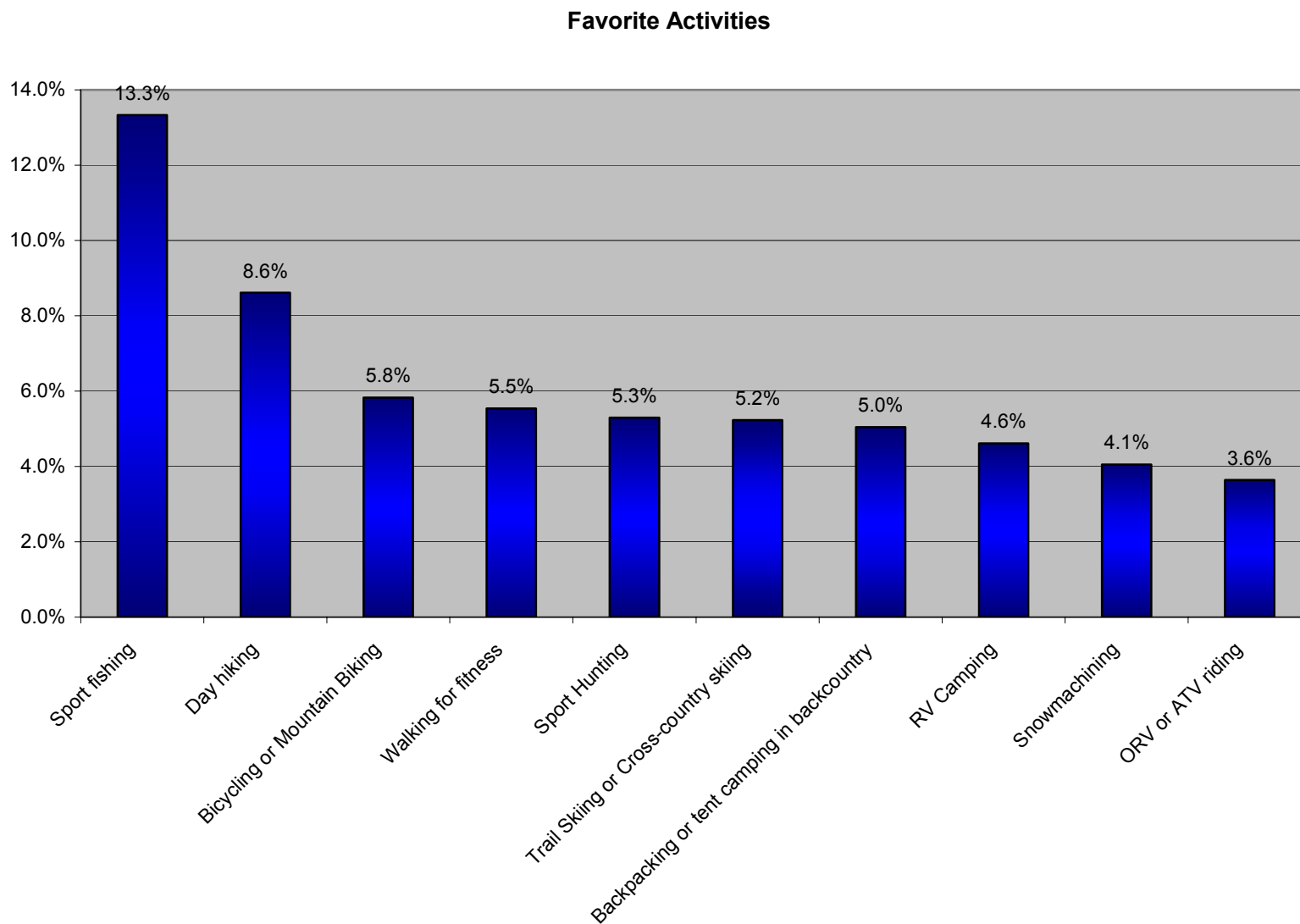
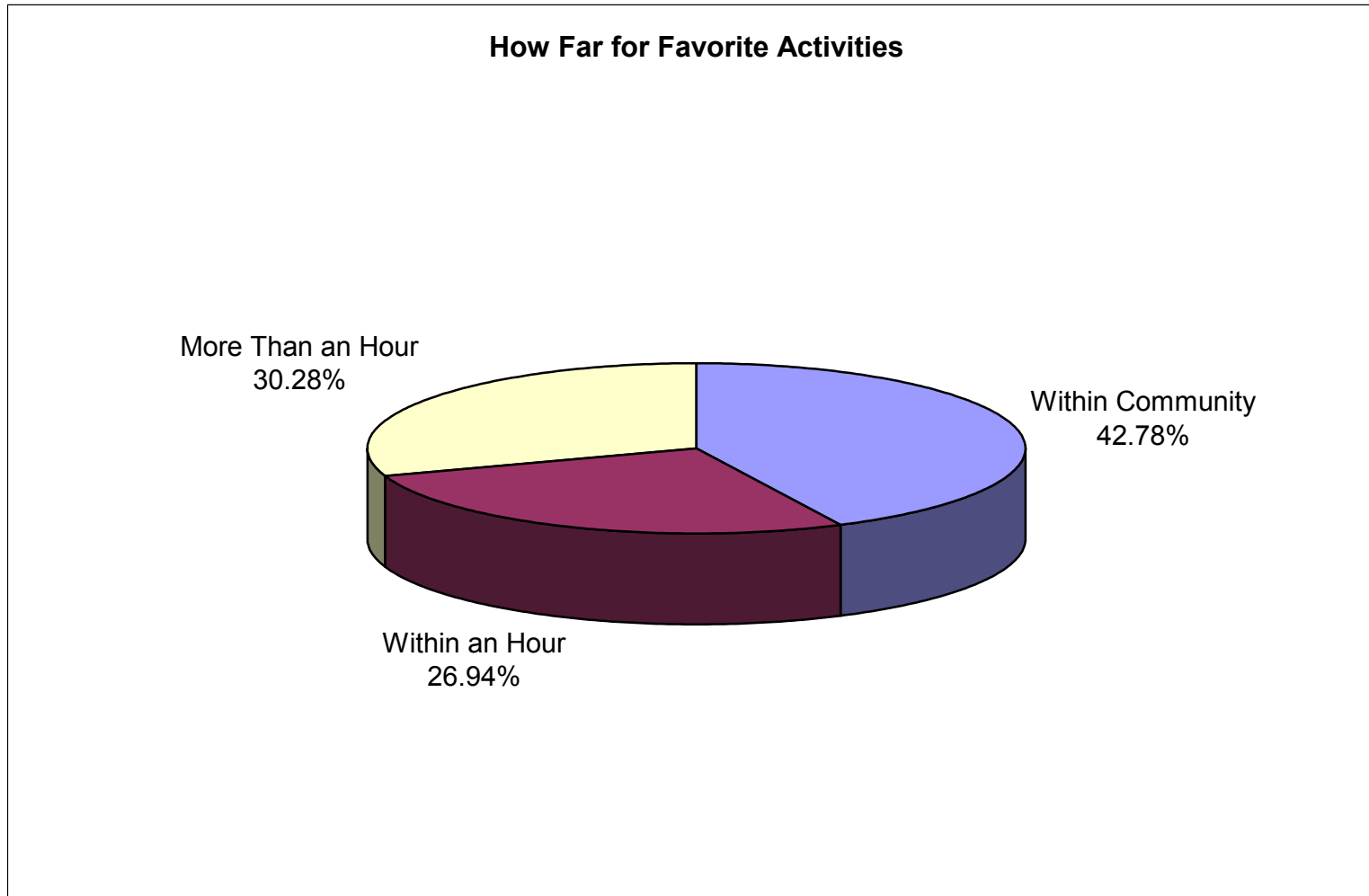


Figure 4.7 – How Far for Favorite Activities



## **HIGHLIGHTS**

While participation rates for most activities decline predictably with age, the highest rate of participation in sport fishing is among Alaskans over 40. Additionally, participation in day hiking and walking for fitness are consistent among all age groups.

Beyond those few activities that demand a significant financial outlay in order to participate, (e.g. skis, powerboats, golf), behavior and attitudes between different income groups is not significantly different.

Males participate more often in shooting, golf, ORV/ATV riding, court games, power boating, snowmobiling, sport fishing, and hunting. Women participate in greater numbers in sledding, swimming, walking for fitness, kayaking, horse riding, and back country skiing.

The two favorite activities among men are fishing and hunting. Fishing is the second favorite activity, with walking for fitness the favorite, among women.

Marital status appears to have substantial effect on recreation patterns and equipment ownership. Married couples fish considerably more often than single people; fishing is the clear favorite activity of married men. Married women's participation in activities such as fishing and hunting are dramatically higher than those of single women. More single than married people tent camp and backpack.

Married men overall own more outdoor equipment than other groups, except for tents, bikes, and dog teams, where married women own slightly more.

Families with children are more likely to participate in berry picking, biking, clamming, field games, picnicking, and open space activities than their counterparts without children. Kayaking and RV camping are participated in more readily by childless households.

Households with children are more inclined to be dissatisfied with current community facilities and opportunities, and to support the suggestion that more recreation programs be provided, and more parks established.

## **ATTITUDES ON FACILITIES, MANAGEMENT, AND RESOURCE PROTECTION**

Respondents were asked a series of value statements to determine what kind of facilities or experiences they would like, and the trade-offs they were willing to make to pay for them.

There was strong to moderate public support for all the proposed park facility improvements and developments. Respondents were also questioned on their support for the development of more trailheads (76 percent support) along roads and highways, more non-motorized trails (74 percent support), and more off-road vehicle trails (56 percent support).

Figure 4.8 - Support for Facility Improvements and Developments

TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT	% SUPPORT 1997
Disabled accessible facilities	86
Public use cabins	79
Tent campgrounds	77
Trailheads along roads	76
Roadside toilets	74
Non-motorized trails	74
Road upgrade (park roads)	71
Picnic areas	68
New parks	67
RV dump stations	64
Boat launches	63
Recreation programs	61
Water/toilets in campgrounds	59
Off-road-vehicle trails	56
RV campgrounds	52
Visitor centers	49
Tourist facilities	41

TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT	% SUPPORT 2004
Public use cabins	77.09
Roadside toilets	75.88
Trailheads along roads	75.37
Non-motorized trails	71.06
New parks	69.42
Disabled accessible facilities	63.59
Tent campgrounds	60.84
Picnic areas	52.72
Road upgrade (park roads)	48.91
Off-road-vehicle trails	47.29
Boat launches	47.02
RV dump stations	43.15
Water/toilets in campgrounds	37.33
RV campgrounds	35.38
Recreation programs	34.42
Visitor centers	29.33
Tourist facilities	23.75

Despite strong support for the facilities and improvements mentioned above, when presented with the choice of using limited funds for facility development or maintenance, 78 percent of respondents favored maintaining current facilities.

Alaskans want better access to outdoor recreation opportunities. Sixty-nine percent responded that the state should acquire private land when it blocks or restricts access to existing parks and facilities. Fifty-five percent support improved access to military lands for outdoor recreation purposes.

Over 40 percent of households report that facilities are often crowded when they want to use them; 66 percent support limiting facility use when they become too crowded. Although 64 percent said there were enough parks and outdoor recreation lands convenient and accessible to them, 69 percent support establishing new parks and recreation areas.

Sixty-seven percent believe the state should increase its protection of areas with historic or archaeological value; 64 percent support the use of park land to promote tourism. Sixty-eight percent believe that parks and outdoor recreation programs help reduce crime and juvenile delinquency.

In addition, 51 percent said trails should accommodate different types of activities, rather than be designated for a limited number; 61 percent said hearing motorized vehicles or motors negatively affects their recreation experience; conversely, 35 percent said it does not.

Eighty-three percent agree that if overcrowding occurs, commercial uses in parks should be limited before personal uses are limited.

### **SUPPORT FOR FUNDING PROPOSALS AND WILLINGNESS TO PAY**

Respondents were asked about five different proposals to help fund the development and maintenance of park facilities, and outdoor recreation programs throughout the state. The percent of support is included in parentheses.

- ☐ Allocate a portion of annual RV registration fees (91 percent).
- ☐ Allocate a portion of annual all-terrain vehicle registration fees (86 percent).
- ☐ Allocate a portion of annual snowmobile registration fees (87 percent).
- ☐ Impose a one penny per gallon tax on gasoline (57 percent).
- ☐ Impose a small tax on the purchase of outdoor gear (43 percent).



When asked if willing to pay user fees for maintenance of outdoor recreation facilities, 82 percent said yes. If a statewide bond issue were put on a general election ballot to fund parks and outdoor recreation programs, 64 percent said they would vote for it. Seventy-two percent said they would purchase a \$10 pin with sales going to help fund outdoor programs.

A copy of the telephone survey and responses to each of the questions is located in Appendix A.

### **OUTDOOR RECREATION TRENDS 1992 -2004**

See Appendix D for a comparison of the 1992, 1997 and 2004 statewide telephone survey results. In addition to asking about all activities included in the 1992 survey, the 1997 and 2004 surveys included several new activities and questions. These are identified by "N/A" (not applicable) in the comparisons. A few old questions were removed. Comments and possible reasons are provided to help interpret the comparisons.

Military base downsizing in Alaska has impacted the amount of recreational use on some wildlife refuges in Alaska. At the peak there were more than 5,500 military personnel at Adak. Their primary uses of the Aleutian Islands Unit of the Alaska Maritime Refuge included fishing, hunting, public use cabins, wildlife viewing, and visitor services provided on the road system and in the Adak visitor center. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services has accordingly reduced its staff at that location to a caretaker status. With the closures of Shemya and Attu, recreational use in those areas has also reduced to a low level. The Ft. Greeley closure in Delta Junction will have a small impact on the hunting and fishing use of the Tetlin Refuge. As the base is retrofitted, some of that use may return. The closure of the King Salmon and Galena air bases showed a substantial reduction in use by military personnel on the Alaska Peninsula/Becharof and the Koyukuk/Nowitna Refuge complexes. The overall civilian use on the Alaska Peninsula/Becharof Complex continues to grow as private industry in the area continues to grow. Military personnel use from Ft. Wainwright in Fairbanks and Elmendorf Air Force Base and Ft. Richardson in Anchorage, remains constant, and is a large recreation component of the railbelt population, both by active and retired personnel.

## **RECREATION PROVIDER SURVEY RESULTS**

A total of 313 community and regional outdoor recreation providers throughout the state were asked to rank in order of importance the outdoor recreation needs in their communities and regions. The categories provided were:

- ☐ Park land acquisition
- ☐ Developed facilities
- ☐ Recreation programs
- ☐ Disabled access
- ☐ Maintenance of existing facilities
- ☐ Other

Fifty-five providers (18% percent of those surveyed) responded.

Figure 4.9 - Comparison Ranking of Outdoor Recreation Needs.

(The 2004 numbers reflect statewide reporting and ranking. 1992 and 1997 results were reported by region i.e. Southeast, Railbelt and Rural. Regional numbers compare 1992 and 1997 – with 1997 in parentheses - by order of importance.)

AREA	LAND	FACILITIES	PROGRAMS	ACCESS	MAINT.	OTHER
Statewide 2004	3	1	5	4	2	
Southeast	4 (4)	1 (1)	2 (3)	5 (5)	3 (4)	6 (2)
Railbelt	4 (5)	1 (1)	5 (6)	3 (4)	2 (2)	6 (3)
Rural	4 (3)	1 (1)	3 (4)	5 (4)	2 (6)	6 (2)

Statewide, developed facilities continue to be the highest priority need overall; maintaining existing facilities continues to be the second; parkland acquisition, particularly the acquisition of parcels adjacent to or within the boundaries of existing park sites ranked as the third highest priority need; access to existing facilities by persons with disabilities ranked as the fourth; and, the need for organized programs and trained staff came in as the fifth priority.

## **FACILITY NEEDS**

Responding providers identified the following specific facility needs (in order of priority):

1. Recreational fields and courts
2. Community parks (play grounds/tot lots, picnic areas, sheltered group facilities, etc.)
3. Trails (new, designate existing, signage)
4. Skate parks/paths (roller blade, skate board, roller skate)
5. Boat ramps

(The top 2 categories were identified three times as often as the last 2.)

## **BARRIERS TO MEETING OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS**

Providers were asked to identify the most significant barriers to outdoor recreation in their communities. Consistent with the last survey, common to all and foremost is the chronic lack of funding for outdoor recreation facility development, maintenance and supervised programs. Providers identified a shortage of land suitable or available for development, and lack of connecting trails, as significant barriers. Respondents also report climate or seasonal conditions as the significant barrier.

Other noted barriers included: accessibility by persons with disabilities, the economy, enforcement of regulations at existing sites, the blocking of historic trails, closing or restricted use of private or corporation held land, lack of equipment to properly maintain existing facilities, over crowding of existing facilities, and lack of adequate public access.

## CHAPTER 5

### STATEWIDE ISSUES, GOALS, AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

*"It is circumstances and proper timing that give action its character..."*  
-Agesilaus

The chief goal of outdoor recreation providers in Alaska is to provide a range of opportunities for responsible use of Alaska's recreation resources while protecting natural values. To successfully meet this goal requires knowledge of the resource, user needs, and participation trends. Public and financial support are also crucial to success. When these are absent, the quality of the recreation experience or the opportunity can be jeopardized. Alaska State Parks staff, the interagency advisors, recreation user groups, and others reviewed the most important issues affecting outdoor recreation in Alaska over the next five years. Although each is an important issue in its own right, there are many points of intersection and overlap among them. Issues are not listed in order of importance. Recommended strategies to meet the goals are identified. A principal objective of this SCORP is to provide a framework of strategies to improve outdoor recreation in Alaska.

#### **ISSUE 1. LACK OF ADEQUATE FUNDING**

*Goal: Secure a reliable source of funding for outdoor recreation in Alaska. Develop programs that allow important projects to be completed and maintained. Strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with other agencies, the private sector, and user groups.*

#### **DISCUSSION**

Outdoor recreation in Alaska has traditionally been supported with a variety of funding sources, primarily appropriations from the state general fund, federal appropriations, Land and Water Conservation Fund grants, and property taxes and revenue sharing for local governments. These funding sources have become severely stressed.

Deferred maintenance is a major concern for all park land managers. For Alaskans and visitors alike, Alaska's state parks are the primary roadside gateways to outdoor recreation, and for many local communities, park visitors are the engine of the local economy. Park visitors expect that park facilities will match Alaska's grand beauty. Facilities must be maintained. For the state parks, a decade's worth of declining maintenance funding has so deteriorated the system that the age-old Alaskan tradition of making repairs with little more than duct tape and baling wire no longer works. As of February 2004, the state parks facility deferred maintenance inventory was \$43.8 million.

Alaskans are supportive of fixing the state park system. The statewide survey of 1592 Alaskans found that 64 percent would support a statewide bond issue for parks and outdoor recreation programs; 78 percent want money invested in maintaining existing park facilities. For Alaskans' continued enjoyment of new road accessible outdoor recreation

and for the economic benefits which visitors bring to local communities, we can no longer ignore the deteriorating condition of our state parks.

The 1965 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) matching grant program has been a vitally important mechanism for assisting the state park system and local recreation programs. Alaska has received about \$29.6 million in LWCF grants with state-side matching funds resulting in the acquisition of more than 20,786 acres of park land and over 379 facility development projects for over 68 communities and agencies.

The state-side of LWCF is a 50/50 matching grant program which provides funding for planning, acquisition, and development of outdoor recreation areas. This program has been an effective and efficient alternative to federal acquisition and development and has been a critical tool for stimulating local and state efforts to provide for recreation needs and to preserve and protect natural areas.

Historically, Congress appropriated about \$300 million nationally for the LWCF each year. As directed by the LWCF Act of 1965, at least 40 percent was reserved to federal agencies for land acquisition purposes, commonly referred to as the “federal side” of the LWCF program. The remainder was available for apportionment to states and communities as matching grants for acquisition, development, and improvement of outdoor recreation areas, commonly referred to as the “state-side” of the LWCF program. The state-side share declined from 60 percent in 1980 to 7 percent in 1990, with a corresponding increase in the federal share.

Without a reliable source of supplemental funding, state and local park and recreation budgets cannot adequately respond to population increases and changing recreation needs. To meet current needs, balance between the federal and state-side share of the LWCF needs to be restored, and greater flexibility in the use of funds allowed. If this cannot be accomplished, alternative funding sources must be developed.

While there are programs and funding to build new facilities, there are few ways to fund maintenance of existing facilities.

In spite of the decline in oil revenues, Alaska’s population and tourism industry are growing. Although surveys show that Alaskans are willing to pay reasonable user fees to help pay for parks and outdoor recreation, these fees cannot make Alaska’s parks and outdoor recreation facilities self-supporting. While other states might fill the budget gap with income tax revenues, reinstatement of a state income tax in Alaska is not likely in the near future. Therefore, Alaska’s state and local outdoor recreation managers must be more innovative than their counterparts in other states, reducing costs and increasing revenues with the limited means available, while continuing to provide the high quality experiences Alaskans expect.

People that attended the public meetings were asked if the following were still valid recommendations:

Figure 5.1 – Lack of Adequate Funding

<b><i>Lack of Adequate Funding</i></b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Support Ongoing Efforts for Reform of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program	<b>65.52%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>34.48%</b>
Continue Interagency Communication and Cooperative Efforts	<b>75.86%</b>	<b>13.79%</b>	<b>10.34%</b>
Privatize Selected Services, Facility Operation and Maintenance	<b>44.83%</b>	<b>41.38%</b>	<b>13.79%</b>
Strengthen Alternative Funding Mechanisms and Programs	<b>89.66%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>10.34%</b>
Develop Alternative Funding Sources	<b>92.59%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>7.41%</b>

## **RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES:**

### **A. SUPPORT ONGOING EFFORTS FOR REFORM OF THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND PROGRAM**

To carry forward the original intent of the LWCF Act, it is necessary for states to receive a far higher share of the annual apportionment and have greater flexibility in their use of funding. This will require changes in the act. Changing the way Congress appropriates LWCF funds is a national issue. However, reforming the LWCF to meet that intent requires coordinated effort at local and state levels.

Alaska's State Liaison Officer (the Alaska State Parks director) for the LWCF program will continue to work with Alaskan citizens, other outdoor recreation providers, the Outdoor Recreation and Trails Advisory Board, Alaska's Congressional delegation, and other states' liaison officers to build a statewide and national constituency supporting ongoing reform of the LWCF program and apportionment formula.

### **B. CONTINUE INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATION & COOPERATIVE EFFORTS**

#### **1. Seek Public and Government Funding**

Alaskan's appreciation of outdoor recreation is well documented. Public agencies should continue to request adequate funding for recreation budgets from Congress, State, and local government.

## 2. Support Professional Organizations:

Outdoor recreation providers at all levels should join and support the work of the Alaska Recreation and Parks Association, Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association, Alaska Visitors Association, and other potential partnering groups. They should participate in statewide, regional, and local workshops, and conferences, and initiate or participate in training opportunities, strategic planning sessions, and partnerships that improve the delivery and efficiency of outdoor recreation services in Alaska.

## 3. Expand Use of Partnerships:

Although not the solution to every budget shortfall, partnerships are an effective tool for minimizing duplication of services and expenditures, and making limited dollars go farther. Local, state, and federal outdoor recreation providers should strengthen current partnerships, initiate partnerships identified in the 1992-1997 SCORP Action Plan (Doing More With Less: Outdoor Recreation Partnerships for the 1990s) or develop new ones to fit local conditions. (The plan contains over 100 site specific partnerships to address the need for cooperative planning, consolidation of services, rehabilitation or upgrade of existing facilities, construction of new facilities in areas of high use, and tourism facilities.)

For example, the Outdoor Recreation and Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB) goals are to improve trails and recreational access for Alaskans, the coordination of state agencies to cooperate with federal agencies to develop new and better opportunities for trails and recreational access on public land, and to help Alaska build and maintain its role as a world class visitor destination. The ORTAB facilitates review, evaluation, and prioritization of eligible outdoor recreation projects for financing under the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and the National Recreation Trails Program. In addition to many advisory roles on recreational access needs, the board can also sponsor community round tables on projects.

Another example is a cooperative support effort for wildlife viewing recreation. Recognizing the increasing public interest in wildlife viewing and education programs, as well as the limitations of current funding, a partnership among 23 state and federal agencies, conservation groups, and the tourism industry began in 1992. The partnership took shape as the Alaska Watchable Wildlife Steering Committee, which has served as a vehicle for development of cooperative projects and networking among groups with related interests. The committee, under the leadership of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, has developed the Alaska Wildlife Viewing Guide (published as part of a national series by Falcon Press), and the "Wildlife Viewing in Alaska" brochure. For each guide book sold, one dollar is contributed by the publisher to the Alaska Watchable Wildlife Trust, administered by the Alaska Conservation Foundation. These funds are designated to support wildlife conservation viewing and education projects. The committee is also coordinating placement of binocular logo signs at road-accessible sites listed in the guide. Developing a computerized database of wildlife viewing site resources, services, and facilities has been a priority, under Alaska Department of Fish and Game leadership. The

Alaska Watchable Wildlife Steering Committee also supports the Teaming with Wildlife initiative as a long-term solution to funding expanded wildlife conservation, recreation, and education programs.

The Alaska Land Managers Forum provides federal, state, and Native land managers a way to regularly meet, exchange information, and develop management approaches to land and resource issues facing Alaska. It conducts studies and advises the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, other federal agencies, the State of Alaska, local governments, tribal governments, and Native corporations established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act with respect to ongoing, planned, and proposed land and resources uses in Alaska. These include transportation planning, land use designation, fish and wildlife management, preservation of cultural and historical resources, and other matters submitted for advice and consultation by the members which appear to require regional or statewide coordination.

### **C. PRIVATIZE SELECTED SERVICES, FACILITY OPERATION, & MAINTENANCE**

#### **1. Expand Use of Contracts:**

Not all budget cuts can be mitigated by cooperative efforts. Some services now performed by agencies could be assumed equally well by the private sector at a savings to public agencies; however, many services are for the short Alaska summer season, which may not provide an adequate economic return for the private sectors. Agencies should evaluate the facilities and services they provide to identify those that they are uniquely qualified to supply and those that could better be provided under a concession contract or negotiated lease with private and non-profit entities. Providers should also consider year-round service possibilities.

The Department of Natural Resources main objective is to keep all parks clean, safe, and open to the public. Privatization of facilities is one manner that this can be achieved however, the privatization must be financially beneficial to the State.

Competent concession operators can effectively provide high quality recreation experiences and promote public safety. In some cases, they can do this more efficiently and at less expense than public agencies, while saving agencies money and providing adequate financial return to agency coffers. Facilities and services most appropriate for concessions are those that do not pay for themselves under a user fee or other revenue generating system (e.g., some campgrounds, visitor centers, public use cabin reservation bookings, firewood sales, and selected facility maintenance), but have potential to do so under the more discretionary wage and benefit standards of the private sector.

Negotiated leases are appropriate for larger-scale tourism related facilities, such as lodges or resorts that require investment of public funds in development of the infrastructure, and the long-term financial commitment of an investor/operator.



## 2. Develop Interagency Commercial Use Policy:

To encourage businesses that provide important services not available from the managing agencies, such as guiding, agencies should cooperatively develop a comprehensive commercial use permit policy. The policy should set standards for professionalism, present consistent permit requirements, and consolidate fees for businesses that operate in more than one jurisdiction. The Alaska Land Managers Forum has begun work to address commercial use policy issues.

## **D. STRENGTHEN ALTERNATIVE FUNDING MECHANISMS AND PROGRAMS**

### 1. Maintain and Promote Volunteer Programs:

Alaska's outdoor recreation providers should continue to maintain and promote volunteer opportunities and coordinate recruitment and placement procedures. Volunteers in Alaska's parks and conservation units come from throughout the United States to assist in management studies, campground management, trail building and maintenance, and to perform a variety of other unfunded tasks.

In 2003, over 700 Alaska State Park volunteers donated over 101,300 hours of labor at a dollar value of more than \$530,000. For the past few years, the supply of well qualified applicants has matched the demand for volunteer positions.

### 2. Organize User Groups:

The "friends of recreation and parks" concept has gained support among business, civic, and user groups. These groups are not only valuable for the volunteer time they contribute in parks, they are also conscientious fund raisers and lobbyists. For example, the Friends of Kodiak State Parks promote enhancement and preservation and protection of the natural, historical and recreational resources within the units of the Kodiak State Parks system, assist in implementing park improvements, enhance conservation and safety awareness, and further educational and interpretive opportunities compatible with the nature of the parks. Any person interested in supporting the mission can apply for membership. Agencies should cooperatively promote and support these advocacy groups to increase their visibility, membership, and effectiveness.

### 3. Support State Wildlife Grant Program:

Booming public interest in watching wildlife and educational programs has greatly expanded the need for additional public services and facilities. Since the early 1990's the Teaming with Wildlife coalition has worked to secure funding for state fish and wildlife agencies. In 2002, President Bush signed the State Wildlife Grant program into law. The primary purpose of this program is to develop wildlife conservation plans and on-the-ground conservation projects

#### 4. Continue to Promote and Support the Alaska State Parks Foundation:

Alaska State Parks should continue to promote the Alaska State Parks Foundation to raise funds for major projects, and purchase programs and equipment for the state park system.

### **E. DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES**

#### Develop a Matching Grant Program:

Alaska State Parks should continue to lead efforts to establish a matching grant program (similar to the Land and Water Conservation Fund). The program should provide technical and financial assistance for development of outdoor recreation facilities and programs. To fund such a program, Alaska State Parks should also continue research on establishing an account for capital development and maintenance of facilities.

### **ISSUE 2. OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET RECREATION NEEDS IN COMMUNITIES**

*Goal: Support efforts to assist communities in meeting the outdoor recreation needs of their citizens.*

### **DISCUSSION**

While there is a need for more outdoor recreation facilities in many communities throughout the state, the shortage appears to be most critical in rural areas.

The need in many Alaska communities for facilities such as play fields, court game facilities, trails, skating rinks, pools, and organized recreation programs is great. In many communities, these facilities are either lacking or poorly maintained. While the constraints to providing facilities are primarily financial, harsh environment also presents problems for constructing and maintaining outdoor facilities. Winters are long and cold. In some areas severe wind chill conditions can be life threatening. Average summer surface water temperatures either prohibit swimming outright or restrict it to very limited areas and periods. Permafrost is a limiting factor to facility sites and other land uses. Incidence of mass wasting of slopes (including snow avalanches), shoreline erosion and human-bear or other potentially dangerous wildlife encounters are common to all regions. Other uniquely Alaskan constraints or dangers include seismic and tsunami potential, and sea ice. The LWCF program includes flexibility to allow enclosed and covered recreation facilities, such as ice rinks and swimming pools, in northern climates.

People that attended the public meetings were asked if the following were still valid recommendations:

Figure 5.2 - Community Recreation Recommendations

<b>COMMUNITY RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Give Some Communities a Higher Priority for LWCF Matching Grants	47.62%	23.81%	28.57%
Develop Alternative Funding Sources	90.91%	4.55%	4.55%
Design Facilities to Reflect Economic Realities and Sustainable Practices	81.82%	4.55%	13.64%

### **RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES:**

#### **A. GIVE SOME COMMUNITIES A HIGHER PRIORITY FOR LWCF MATCHING GRANTS**

A stated purpose of the LWCF Act is “to strengthen the health and vitality of the citizens of the United States.” In consideration of the critical imbalance in facilities and funding available in many communities, Alaska’s State Liaison Officer should work with the ORTAB Board and National Park Service to continue to ensure that more projects are funded through the LWCF (provided they meet eligibility requirements), based on state open project selection process criteria (see Chapter 6), which considers whether the community has received its per capita share of Land and Water Conservation Fund money.

#### **B. DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES**

Alaska’s outdoor recreation providers should develop a state trust (similar to the LWCF) for facility development and technical assistance on outdoor recreation projects in Alaska’s communities. (See section on developing a state matching grant alternative to the LWCF program.) The State of Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program is an example of a program that provides funds for acquisition and development of local and state parks, water access sites, trails, critical habitat, natural areas, and urban wildlife habitat areas.

#### **C. DESIGN FACILITIES TO REFLECT ECONOMIC REALITIES AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES**

Because funds are limited, and maintenance costs high, communities and funding programs should place an emphasis on the construction of facilities with low maintenance requirements, revenue generating capability and environmentally sound practices (sustainability). Continued maintenance should be part of the design.

### **ISSUE 3. IMPROVED ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES**

*Goal: Provide more convenient, legal, and barrier-free access to outdoor recreation opportunities on Alaska’s public lands and waters.*

## **DISCUSSION**

As the state's population increases and the tourism industry expands, the demand for more trails, boat ramps, and barrier-free access (where appropriate) to recreation facilities increases. While many people desire to recreate in unoccupied natural setting, the shortage of access to recreation resources has led to overuse and resource damage in high-demand areas, and user conflicts. There is an emerging incompatibility of uses and values, especially on multi-use trails. There is a desire for quiet places on public lands, as well as other needs.

Trail-related activities such as hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, ORV and snowmobile riding are not only popular outdoor recreation activities in their own right, but they also provide access to other activities. Trail usage is high throughout the state and developing more trail opportunities is a high priority for many Alaskans. Roads, railroads, and ferries are used year-round as primary access to hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, boating, fishing, virtually all forms of recreation connected to them, and provide access to other opportunities. In addition, hundreds of miles of temporary roads and logging roads offer access to recreation.

## **TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS**

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA21) – which supersedes ISTEA, provide for development of much-needed community transportation improvements, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, preservation of historic transportation structures, and scenic beautification. These “Transportation Enhancements” are eligible for federal funding as long as they relate to surface transportation and are included in and are the following 12 qualifying activities:

1. provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles,
2. provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists,
3. acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites,
4. scenic or historic highway programs (including the provision of tourist and welcome center facilities),
5. landscaping and other scenic beautification,
6. historic preservation,
7. rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities (including historic railroad facilities and canals),
8. preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian or bicycle trails),
9. control and removal of outdoor advertising,
10. archaeological planning and research,
11. environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity, and establishment of transportation museums.

While Transportation Enhancements are linked to transportation, they include recreation facilities and infrastructure, and usually improve access to recreation opportunities. Most improvements under the first category (facilities for pedestrians and bicycles) are trails. In fact, over half of the Transportation Enhancement funding programmed nation-wide since ISTEA was passed by Congress in 1991 has been invested in bicycle and pedestrian trails. In addition to Transportation Enhancement, which are projects “above and beyond” basic transportation infrastructure needs it is policy in the State of Alaska to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians in the design of state-owned roads.

Additionally, a state may spend highway funds for wildlife viewing, signing and facilities, construction of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, and for construction of bicycle transportation facilities on or adjacent to roads on the National Highway System or the state highway system.

### **Trails and Recreational Access for Alaskans (TRAAK)**

In 1995, Alaska Governor Tony Knowles initiated the Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska (TRAAK) program. TRAAK has three main goals:

- to build trails that safely link neighborhoods, parks, and commercial areas together,
- to improve access to recreation for Alaskans, and
- to build and maintain Alaska’s role as a world-class visitor destination.

TRAAK has been an important cooperative program that brings together four state agencies as partners: the departments of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Natural Resources, Fish & Game, and Commerce and Economic Development. Transportation enhancements are the largest component of the TRAAK program but through TRAAK, the State implements two other components of ISTEA and TEA21, the Scenic Byways Program and the Recreation Trails Program (Symms Grant Program).

The TRAAK Board is in the process of being replaced by the **ORTAB (Outdoor Recreation and Trails Advisory Board)** that will continue to ensure that public concerns are addressed. The board includes members of the public as well as non-voting members from the department of Natural Resources. The board can review and recommend priorities for all outdoor recreation funding programs, and has specific authority to recommend approval of grant awards under the Symms program. Another board responsibility will be to review Land and Water Conservation Fund project applications and to assist with project prioritization as prescribed by the LWCF open project selection process.

### **Recreation Trails Program**

The Recreation Trails Program is a component of ISTEA, administered on the federal side by the Federal Highway Administration, and on the state side by Alaska State Parks

(Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation). Under this grant program, approximately \$400,000 comes to Alaska each year for building and improving hiking, skiing, snowmobile, and off-road-vehicle trails in Alaska. This is a competitive grant program; grants are awarded to organizations and agencies. The funds are based on a formula that estimates the percentage of federal tax on fuel used by off-road recreational vehicles.

### **Scenic Byways**

The State Scenic Byways Program was established by DOT&PF in 1993, to designate as scenic those segments of the highway system that have outstanding scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, natural, or archaeological qualities. The program does not restrict land use along the corridor. However, it gives DOT&PF authority to develop standards for signs and informational displays along designated Scenic Byway routes. The Federal Highway Administration administers the National Scenic Byways Program. Alaska's Scenic Byways Program relies in large part on the annual grants under this program. "All American Road" is a national designation given to the nation's most scenic routes, based on an application initiated by the State. The Seward Highway has this designation. The Scenic Byways program is coordinated with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Watchable Wildlife and Transportation Enhancement projects within designated scenic road corridors.

### **Corridor Assessments**

DOT&PF has developed Corridor Assessments for the 10 major National Highway System routes in Alaska (Dalton, Parks, Richardson, Seward, Sterling, Alaska, Glenn, Haines, Klondike, and Tok Cut-off highways). These assessments focus on the highway corridors and provide an inventory of existing improvements and prospective improvement projects that qualify for funding. The assessments may be expanded to include opportunities along but outside the corridors. These reports will be used as a long range planning tool for identifying projects.

### **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program**

This program ensures a dedicated funding source for transportation planning and projects that demonstrate potential for improving air quality and mitigating traffic congestion in areas that do not meet goals and requirements of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Examples of eligible activities are pedestrian and bicycle facilities, transit system capital expansion and improvements, and traffic flow improvements.

### **Federal Lands Highway Program**

The Federal Lands Highway Program covers highway programs in cooperation with federal land managing agencies, such as the National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Forest Service. Funding is provided for the three existing categories of Federal Lands highways: Indian Reservation Roads, Park Roads and Parkways, and Public Lands Highways (discretionary and Forest Highways), and for a new category called Refuge

Roads (federally owned public roads providing access to or within the National Wildlife Refuge System). Program funds can be used for transit facilities within public lands, national parks, and Indian reservations and can also be used as the State/local match for most types of federal-aid highway funded projects. It also provides transportation engineering services for planning, design, construction, and rehabilitation of highways and bridges providing access to federally owned lands, and planning for tourism and recreational travel, interpretive signage, provisions for pedestrians and bicycles, and construction of roadside rest areas. Projects are not selected or funded as part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, but have their own planning process (selected projects are listed in the STIP).

In addition, many local transportation improvement plans include access-related projects that ISTEA could fund. Examples of such plans include the Municipality of Anchorage's Anchorage Metropolitan Area Mass Transportation Study (AMATS), which includes a transportation improvement program; Homer bicycle trails plan; Kenai Peninsula Borough and Fairbanks comprehensive trails plans; and Northwest Arctic Borough Transportation Plan (involving staking hundreds of miles of trails).

### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

Making parks and outdoor recreation facilities accessible to residents and visitors also means accommodating the needs of special populations. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides guidance and a timetable for public agencies to make access to the disabled population a reality. The Act prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, and provides for equal access to public services and transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunication services. According to the Act, an individual with a disability is one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more life activities, a record of such impairment, or who is regarded as having such an impairment. As outlined in the Act, major life activities include caring for oneself, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, and working.

The Act prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation, including parks and other places of exercise or recreation. It specified an effective date of January 26, 1992, for alterations to public accommodations, and January 26, 1993, for new construction. Physical barriers in existing public accommodations (including parks) must be removed if readily achievable (i.e., easily accomplished and without much expense). If not, alternative methods of providing services must be offered, if those methods are readily achievable. Meeting the spirit and the requirements of this Act to make parks and outdoor recreation facilities accessible is a challenge and a priority for Alaska's outdoor recreation managers.

## IDENTIFICATION OF LEGAL TRAILS AND LEGAL ACCESS

Nationwide, trails of all kinds are experiencing significant increases in use and public support. Trail development is also increasing to meet growing demands for year-round trail based recreation and to promote economic development.

Even as new trails are developed, many existing trails are lost as property owners put their land to other uses. Trails must be legally identified, established, and dedicated for long term use to avoid this loss of recreational opportunity.

Enacted in 1999, AS 34.17.055 can provide liability protection for private landowners who grant public trail easements across their property. This legislation provides long needed protection to and incentive for private landowners to participate in the identification and dedication of trails for public access for recreational purposes by the state, cities or boroughs.

People that attended the public meetings were asked if the following were still valid recommendations:

Figure 5.3 – Improve Access to Outdoor Recreation Resources

<b><i>Improve Access to Outdoor Recreation Resources</i></b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Implement TEA-21 Provisions	65.38%	0.00%	34.62%
Improve Access to Water-Based Recreation	72.73%	22.73%	4.55%
Develop Inventory of Barrier-Free Outdoor Recreation Facilities	72.73%	22.73%	4.55%
Continue Cooperative Planning Efforts with "Barrier-Free" Advocacy Groups	72.73%	13.64%	13.64%
Consider Incompatibility Among Users and User Values	86.36%	4.55%	9.09%
Continue Identifying and Legally Dedicating Existing Trails	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%

### **RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES:**

#### **A. IMPLEMENT TEA-21 PROVISIONS**

##### **1. Improve Interagency Coordination:**

Improved communication and coordinated planning among local, state, and federal transportation and recreation agencies and trail users is necessary to develop a list of priority projects eligible for funds under the TEA-21 enhancement program.



## 2. Continue work on Statewide Trail Inventory and Alaska Trails System.

Planners with the Department of Natural Resources, with assistance from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and TRAAK board, and funded in part through an LWCF planning grant administered by the National Park Service, developed an Alaska Recreational Trails Plan which was completed in October 2000. Criteria, goals, and procedures are contained in the Plan. The Alaska Trails System, as envisioned, will be made up of Alaska's best summer and winter trails for motorized and non-motorized trail users. An Alaska Trails System map will be produced and updated periodically to reflect new trails as they are added to the system.

### **B. IMPROVE ACCESS TO WATER-BASED RECREATION**

Outdoor recreation providers should develop a priority list for the development or improvement of access to water-based recreation resources throughout the state. State, federal, and LWCF funding should be sought to meet high priority access and resource protection needs. These should be coordinated with the Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux and Pittman-Robertson programs, which provide grants for sport fishing and sport hunting access facilities.

### **C. DEVELOP INVENTORY OF BARRIER-FREE OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES**

Agencies should cooperate in the inventory of recreation facilities and their compliance with ADA accessibility standards. This inventory can be used in a variety of ways, including the indication of accessible facilities in brochures and other printed materials for public use, in the formulation of capital budgets for remedial work, and as a measure of any facility deficiencies for serving disabled populations. A specialized brochure devoted to accessible facilities is a good candidate for a partnership among agencies and user groups.

### **D. CONTINUE COOPERATIVE PLANNING EFFORTS WITH "BARRIER-FREE" ADVOCACY GROUPS**

Outdoor recreation providers should strengthen partnerships between outdoor recreation providers and barrier free advocacy groups by exchanging technical information about facility needs. One agency could serve as a clearinghouse for state-of-the-art information and design standards for barrier-free access. Providers should assist in identifying physical and attitudinal barriers that inhibit participation by special populations in outdoor recreation activities. Higher priority for funding could be given to projects with multiple barrier-free application, such as wheelchairs, walking aids, and elderly access, where appropriate.

## **E. CONSIDER INCOMPATIBILITY AMONG USERS AND USER VALUES**

Recreation providers, user groups, and interested public should consider all viewpoints in recreation planning (see public workshop comments in Appendix D, as example). Natural quiet is an essential resource and should receive specific treatment in planning documents as do other valuable resources. Quiet, like other resources, should be considered for its values and benefits; the wide variety of possible methods to protect and restore natural quiet to public lands should be considered.

## **F. CONTINUE IDENTIFYING AND LEGALLY DEDICATING EXISTING TRAILS**

The identification and legal dedication of trails for long-term public use should continue. Creating and reserving a public easement establishes an additional layer of protection for trails that safeguard legal public access.

## **ISSUE 4. SHORTAGE OF TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES ON PUBLIC LANDS**

*Goal: Support and promote balanced use and development of Alaska's public lands for outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism.*

### **DISCUSSION**

Alaska's visitors are not only out-of-state visitors. Alaskans traveling out of their communities, visiting other parts of the state, and hosting their family and/or friends are also visitors. The 2004 statewide resident telephone survey showed that large percentages of Alaskans recreated/used facilities more than an hour away from their community in the past year: sightseeing or driving for pleasure, 31.3 percent; sport fishing, 30.8 percent; tent camping in a campground, 25.5 percent; backpacking or tent camping in backcountry, 24.9 percent; RV camping 22.5 percent; clam digging or beach combing 21.5 percent; sport hunting, 21 percent; river canoe, rafting, or floating, 18.3 percent; power boating, 15 percent; and snow machining, 12.2 percent. Wildland recreation and in-state tourism represent not only a lifestyle activity, but a significant economic force in Alaska.

Overall in 2003, visitors spent over \$2.4 billion on food, travel, lodging, and outdoor recreation equipment and services in Alaska. For some of Alaska's small communities, tourism is one of the few opportunities for a cash economy.

- The visitor industry ranks second in terms of private sector employment.
- Over 27,000 people are employed in the Alaska visitor industry during the peak season; 19,000 jobs are attributed to outside travelers; 8,000 to Alaskans traveling within the state.
- With an 84 percent local hire rate, the visitor industry employs the highest percentage of Alaska residents, compared to all private sector industries.
- Travel and tourism impacts another 52,000 jobs in other sectors of the economy.

- Visitor and tourism businesses generate \$1.6 billion per year in revenues.

The past several decades have seen rapid growth in the number of visitors to Alaska. Seven out of 10 visitors come to Alaska during the peak travel months of June through September. An estimated 1.31 million visitors traveled to Alaska in 2003.

The estimated number of total visitors to Alaska between 1997 and 2003 increased by more than 190,000, a total increase of nearly 17 percent and an average annual growth rate of 2.4 percent.

The number of visitors to the state has increased steadily each year. Cruise ship visitor volumes experienced the most dramatic rate of growth between 1997 and 2001 (the last year for which detailed figures are available), increasing 30 percent, with an average annual growth rate of approximately 6 percent. The largest portion of Alaska's visitors in 2001 were from the United States (86 percent), Canada accounted for approximately 10 percent of visitors while overseas visitors were about 4 percent. In the early years of Alaska non-resident tourism, independent travelers were rare. Nearly all visitors traveled as part of a packaged tour. The independent market in 2001 was 30 percent, or 360,840 visitors. Visitors traveling independently, but who purchased a tour of some type accounted for another 27% or 324,756.

Typically, independent travelers stay in Alaska longer, travel more widely around the state, and spend more money than other visitors. In general, they are sophisticated tourists looking for "world class" scenery, wildlife encounters, adventure, and Native Alaskan culture. In response to this trend, the number of small Alaskan businesses offering customized tours and nature-based travel has grown.

In 2001, 25 percent of all visitors were 61 or over, 19 percent were 51–60, 21 percent were 41–50, 10% were 31–40, 10 percent were 21–30 and 6 percent were less than 21 years old. This indicates a trend toward younger visitors than in the past. In 1996, 50 percent of Alaska's visitors were over 55.

Alaska visitors are moderately well-to-do, with 49% of respondents earning over \$75,000 per year. Thirty percent of respondents earned more than \$100,000 annually. Sixty two percent of respondents were employed at the time of their visit, and 24 percent were retired. Fifty two percent were males and 48 percent females.

Alaska benefits from a wide array of recreational tourism opportunities. Alaska's premier wildland recreation and tourism destinations are publicly owned, with local, state and federal recreation agencies providing many of the basic needs of Alaska's visitors. However, Alaska's public lands have not realized their potential for providing year round outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities. While millions of dollars in advertising are spent every year to attract visitors to Alaska, public land and recreation managing agencies have experienced serious financial hardships. Providing facilities that meet the changing demands of recreational users and tourists often requires expensive infrastructure. The private sector is often better able to provide capital and labor intensive services needed to

provide these facilities than are public agencies. Whether under long-term negotiated lease, concession contract, or other type of arrangement, well-planned and designed facilities, built on public lands and operated by the private sector, can meet a growing need and provide positive economic return to the public. In addition, there is growing interest and support for providing recreational facilities and services on private land.

People that attended the public meetings were asked if the following were still valid recommendations:

Figure 5.4 – Shortage of Tourism Opportunities on Public Lands

<b><i>Shortage of Tourism Opportunities on Public Lands</i></b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Expand Cooperative Planning Efforts	82.76%	3.45%	13.79%
Maintain and Expand Private-Public Nature-Based Tourism partnerships	69.23%	23.08%	7.69%
Promote Private Sector Development on Public Lands Where Appropriate	25.00%	64.29%	10.71%
Develop Year-Round Tourism Destinations and Related Services on Public Lands	60.71%	28.57%	10.71%
Increase Capital Spending to Rehabilitate and Expand Facilities	79.31%	13.79%	6.90%
Expand Public Use Cabin System	72.41%	20.69%	6.90%
Promote the Alaska Public Lands Information Centers	75.86%	13.79%	10.34%

## **RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES:**

### **A. EXPAND COOPERATIVE PLANNING AND MARKETING EFFORTS**

Coordinating committees, such as the TRAAK Board and the Alaska Land Managers Forum, should continue to emphasize interagency cooperation to better coordinate recreation and tourism development. This will enable better quality control and more precise targeting of tourism developments and visitor services related to outdoor recreation.

As in-state and out-of-state demand increases, special emphasis should be on improved and increased access to visitor destinations and sites necessary to disperse use. Emphasis should include balancing the needs of all users. Emphasis should also be on enhancements to Alaska's highway and marine highway systems using ISTEAF funding.

## **B. MAINTAIN AND EXPAND PRIVATE-PUBLIC NATURE-BASED TOURISM PARTNERSHIPS**

Carefully directed and managed tourism can benefit conservation of wildland resources and the Alaska economy. Agencies should continue cooperative efforts to promote and enhance Alaska's nature-based tourism opportunities through the Alaska Visitors Association, the interagency Watchable Wildlife program, the Alaska Natural History Association, Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association, and other partnerships.

There are now signs for wildlife viewing areas. The Alaska Wildlife Viewing Guide was written by Alaska Department of Fish and Game and other agencies in 1996. Roadside areas included in the guide are being signed with the national binocular logo symbol by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and other agencies. These signs will help direct people interested in viewing fish and wildlife to designated state and federal areas.

## **C. PROMOTE PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT ON PUBLIC LANDS WHERE APPROPRIATE**

Where appropriate, outdoor recreation agencies should foster an investment climate that encourages and supports public-private partnerships to help meet outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism facility needs. Such development requires consideration of land use plans, applicable laws and ordinances, and current recreational and existing use patterns, and working with affected publics. (See recommendations on privatizing selected services, facility operation, and maintenance.)

## **D. DEVELOP YEAR-ROUND TOURISM DESTINATIONS AND RELATED SERVICES ON PUBLIC LANDS**

Agencies should work with recreation user groups and affected publics, and major recreation organizations when planning, designing, building, and promoting facilities with year round capabilities or applications, and should also keep year round and existing use in mind when designing summer facilities. (See the section on private sector development on public lands, above.)

## **E. INCREASE CAPITAL SPENDING TO REHABILITATE AND EXPAND FACILITIES**

Through contact with user groups and advisory boards, recreation managers should build constituent support for capital budgets to fund the rehabilitation and expansion of existing public facilities. New (revenue generating) facilities at locations of high demand should also be supported. Maintenance should be part of that support for existing and new facilities.

## F. EXPAND PUBLIC USE CABIN SYSTEM

Recreation providers should develop partnerships with the private and public sectors for the design, construction, marketing, operation, and maintenance of an expanded public use cabin system. Consider a “hut to hut” system, modeled after the successful European and New Zealand programs.

## G. PROMOTE THE ALASKA PUBLIC LANDS INFORMATION CENTERS (APLICS)

These inter-agency centers allow visitors to stop by or write to just one place for all the information necessary to plan an Alaskan adventure on public lands. Agencies serviced by the APLICs are: National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska Division of Tourism, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, and Bureau of Land Management.

Figure 5.5 - Implementation Responsibilities

	Strategy/Action	Participating Agencies
Support effort for ongoing reform of LWCF program	ASP, NPS	
Continue interagency communication and cooperative efforts	All	
Seek Public and Government Funding	All	
Support professional organizations	All	
Expand use of partnerships	All	
Privatize selected services, facility operation, and maintenance	SOA	All others
Expand use of contracts	All	
Develop interagency commercial use policy	All	
Strengthen alternative funding mechanisms and programs	All	
Maintain/promote volunteer programs	All	
Organize user groups	All	
Support State Wildlife grant program	All	
Promote and Support Alaska State Parks Foundation	ASP	All others
Develop alternative funding sources	NPS, SOA	All others
Develop a matching grant program	ASP	
Give some communities a higher priority for LWCF matching grants	ASP, NPS	
Design facilities to reflect economic realities	All	
Implement TEA-21 provisions	DOT/PF	All
Improve interagency coordination	All	
Continue statewide trail inventory and plan	ASP	
Improve access to water-based recreation	ASP, ADFG	All others
Develop inventory of barrier-free outdoor recreation facilities	ASP	
Continue cooperative planning with barrier-free advocacy groups	All	
Consider user value in high-use areas	All	
Continue identifying and legally dedicating existing trails	All	
Expand cooperative planning and marketing efforts	All	

Maintain/expand private-public tourism partnerships	All	
Promote private sector development on public lands	DNR	USFS, BLM
Develop year-round tourism destinations on public lands	DNR	USFS, BLM
Increase capital spending to rehab/expand facilities	SOA	All others
Expand public use cabin system	ASP	USFS, BLM, USFWS
Promote Alaska Public Lands Information Centers (APLIC)	All	

**Key:**

<b>ADFG</b>	Alaska Department of Fish and Game	<b>LG</b>	Local Government
<b>ASP</b>	Alaska State Parks	<b>NPS</b>	National Park Service
<b>BLM</b>	Bureau of Land Management	<b>SOA</b>	State of Alaska
<b>DCRA</b>	Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs	<b>USFS</b>	US Forest Service
<b>DNR</b>	Alaska Department of Natural Resources	<b>USFWS</b>	US Fish and Wildlife Service
<b>DOT/PF</b>	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public facilities	<b>USGS</b>	US Geological Survey (APLIC only)

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND PROGRAM PRIORITIES AND FUNDING CYCLE**

In this chapter, the relationship between the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program is summarized, priorities for LWCF funds identified, and the schedule for applying for a LWCF grant outlined, assuming continued funding of the LWCF grant program.

#### **THE LWCF GRANT PROGRAM**

The LWCF Act of 1965, as amended, had a stated goal of providing a nationwide legacy of high quality outdoor recreation. The Act created a 50/50 match grant program available to State and local governments to acquire, develop and improvement basic outdoor recreation facilities to serve the general public. In Alaska, this program is administered at the state level by Alaska State Parks.

#### **SCORP AND THE LWCF PROGRAM**

To be eligible to participate in the LWCF program, each state must have a current SCORP on file with the National Park Service (the federal agency responsible for administering the LWCF). Through the SCORP planning process, agencies and the public identify capital investment priorities for acquiring, developing, and protecting outdoor recreation resources. These priority needs are then used as a guide to direct the state's allocation of its LWCF apportionment. Proposals that are 1) submitted by eligible applicants, 2) for eligible types of projects, and 3) that address priority needs identified in the SCORP, are eligible to compete for 50/50 matching grants.

#### **THE OPEN PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS**

The Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) was developed to accomplish the following goals:

1. Provide for public knowledge of and participation in the formulation and application of the project selection process utilized by the state in allocating LWCF assistance.
2. Ensure that all potential state and local applicants are aware of the availability of and process for obtaining LWCF assistance, and provide opportunities for all eligible agencies to submit project applications and have them considered on an equitable basis.
3. Provide a measurable link, through published selection criteria, to the specific outdoor recreation needs and priorities identified in SCORP policies and implementation programs.



4. Assure that the distribution of LWCF assistance is accomplished in a non-discriminatory manner, especially with regard to minority populations, the elderly and people with disabilities, and ensure a fair and equitable evaluation of all applications for LWCF assistance.

Through the OPSP, project proposals are submitted to Alaska State Parks according to the schedule outlined at the end of this chapter. Proposals are evaluated, scored, and ranked based on 12 factors, one of which is compliance with needs and objectives of the SCORP. Compliance with SCORP objectives is weighted more heavily than are other criteria. The maximum number of points awarded a project through the evaluation process is 150; up to 55 points are awarded to projects addressing high SCORP priorities.

Other criteria for project selection include: compliance with a local plan, public support, sponsor's ability to operate and maintain project after completion, site suitability, proximity to public areas or facilities, age groups served, special populations served, environmental impact, per capita share of LWCF money previously received by sponsor, and innovative or creative aspects of the project.

Appendix G contains the full Open Project Selection Process.

## **LOCAL RECREATION PLAN**

Because the SCORP's priorities are generalized and may not accurately address a specific community's needs, Alaska State Parks grant administration staff developed the "local recreation plan" option. Completion of this plan will not only help sponsors better compete for LWCF grants, it will assure that grants are awarded based on community as well as statewide priorities. See Appendix E for local recreation plan guidelines.

A project must be identified as a priority need in the SCORP to be eligible for funding from the LWCF program. However, a project identified as a priority need in either a local or a regional plan as well as the SCORP will be awarded additional points in the LWCF scoring process, thus providing a distinct scoring advantage for that project.

Alaska's OPSP requires project proposals to be identified in a local or regional plan. For communities without any formal plan in place, an adopted local recreation plan will meet this requirement.

The local recreation plan is not meant to replace existing comprehensive local or regional plans. However, in communities with outdated plans (over 10 years old), a local recreation plan may be submitted to advance a project not identified in the original plan, provided the local recreation plan is approved as an addendum to the original plan.

## PRIORITIES FOR LWCF FUNDING

Outdoor recreation priorities are based on responses to the public and the community recreation provider surveys conducted by Alaska State Parks in the spring of 2004. Only those projects that meet a priority need identified in the SCORP are eligible for LWCF funding.

### STATE PRIORITIES

The following are priorities for Alaska State Parks and other state agencies that manage outdoor recreation resources (e.g., Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water).

Figure 6.1 – State Priorities

PROJECT TYPE	PRIORITY
Rehabilitate, upgrade or expand existing high-demand facilities	High
Construct public use cabins/Expand public use cabin system	High
Rehabilitate, upgrade or expand trails/trailheads	High
Land acquisition of in-holdings or access to existing recreation lands and facilities	Medium
Provide more facilities for the disabled	Medium
Acquisition of wetlands to protect recreation values	Medium
Land acquisition for new parks or outdoor recreation areas	Low

### COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The following are priorities for community recreation projects.

Figure 6.2 – Community Priorities

PROJECT TYPE	PRIORITY
Community parks/playgrounds	High
Trails	High
Winter facilities	High
Public use cabins	High
Campgrounds	High
Rehabilitate, upgrade or expand existing facilities	High
Meet accessibility requirements of ADA	Medium
Boat launches	Medium
Skate parks	Medium
Land acquisition of in-holdings or access to existing recreation lands and facilities	Medium
Land acquisition for new parks or outdoor recreation areas	Low

Note: Community parks, field sports (e.g., baseball, soccer), outside court sports (e.g., basketball, volleyball), picnic areas, and playgrounds/tot lots have been combined into one category: “community parks/playgrounds”. “Trails” include summer and winter motorized, non-motorized trails, and multi-use trails. “Winter facilities” include sheltered or open outdoor hockey and ice skating rinks, sledding areas, downhill and cross country ski areas, and warming huts. Skate parks include roller blade, skateboard, and roller skate parks and paths.

## **THE OPEN PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS SCHEDULE**

The following is a target timeline to be used when funding is anticipated for the program. Variables such as ORTAB meeting dates, staffing levels and obtaining final application documentation from sponsor could alter this timeline.

September - Public announcements of anticipated funding made and preliminary applications solicited.

December – Preliminary applications due to SLO. Approximately 90 days provided for the submission after announcement.

January – Hold public meeting of the Outdoor Recreation and Trails Advisory Board to review and rank preliminary applications. SLO approves final ranking.

February through April – SLO staff works with sponsors whose preliminary applications ranked high enough to be funded to complete full application packages.

May – full application packages submitted to the National Park Service for final approval.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **WETLANDS**

#### **WETLANDS AS A COMPONENT OF THE SCORP**

The United States Congress enacted the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (PL 99645) to protect and promote conservation of our nation's important wetlands. The act amends the LWCF Act to require SCORPs to specifically address wetlands... "as an important recreation resource," and to allow states to use LWCF funds to acquire wetlands identified in the SCORP. This chapter guides the State in identifying high recreation value wetlands that should receive priority attention for acquisition or other protective efforts.

The Emergency Wetlands Resources Act also requires SCORPs to be consistent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) wetland programs and policies, and it requires the SCORP wetland component to be developed cooperatively with other agencies. This chapter was prepared through the cooperative efforts of the USFWS Alaska Regional Office, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

#### **ALASKA'S WETLANDS**

Alaska is in a unique situation in relation to its wetlands (Figures 7.1 and 7.2). The USFWS estimates that the State contains approximately 175 million acres of wetlands, or 63 percent of the total wetland acreage for the U. S. (Hall et al. 1994). Wetlands cover 43.3 percent of Alaska's surface area. In the lower 48 states, wetlands occupy only 5.2 percent of the surface area.

Wetland losses have been much less in Alaska compared to the lower 48 states. The USFWS estimates that over the past 200 years, 53 percent of the original wetland acreage in the conterminous U.S. has been lost. During the same time period, less than 1 percent of Alaska's wetland cover has been filled or drained (Dahl 1990).

The density of Alaska's wetlands is extremely variable across regions (see Map 7.1). For example, wetland habitats cover 83 percent of the Arctic Coastal Plain, while less than 11 percent of the Aleutian Island Chain and Kodiak Archipelago are wetlands. Wetland extent in other physiographic regions includes: 1) Cook Inlet/Susitna Lowlands - 28 percent, 2) Yukon Flats - 38 percent, and 3) Selawik/Kobuk Delta - 76 percent.

While some wetland types in Alaska are extensive in area, others are very limited. Within the 14-million-acre Arctic Coastal Plain, less than one percent of the wetlands are coastal salt marshes. These marshes are important staging and feeding areas for a significant number of Migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Similarly, very narrow zones of riparian wetlands are

Figure 8.1 Wetlands Of The U.S.

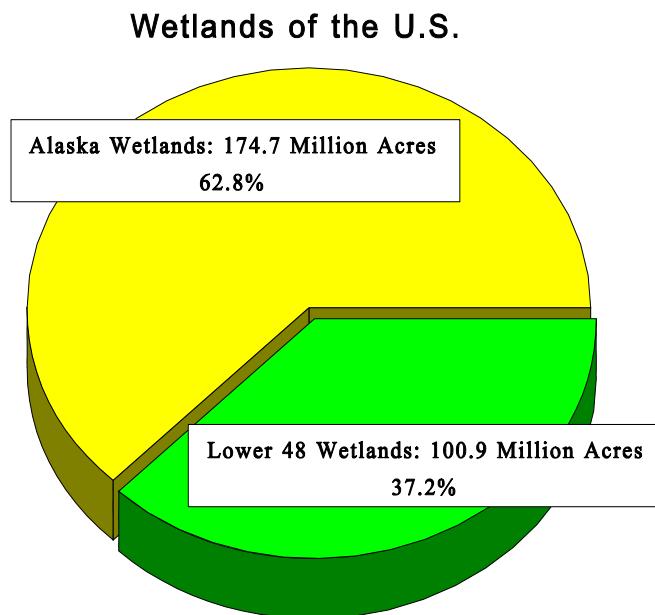
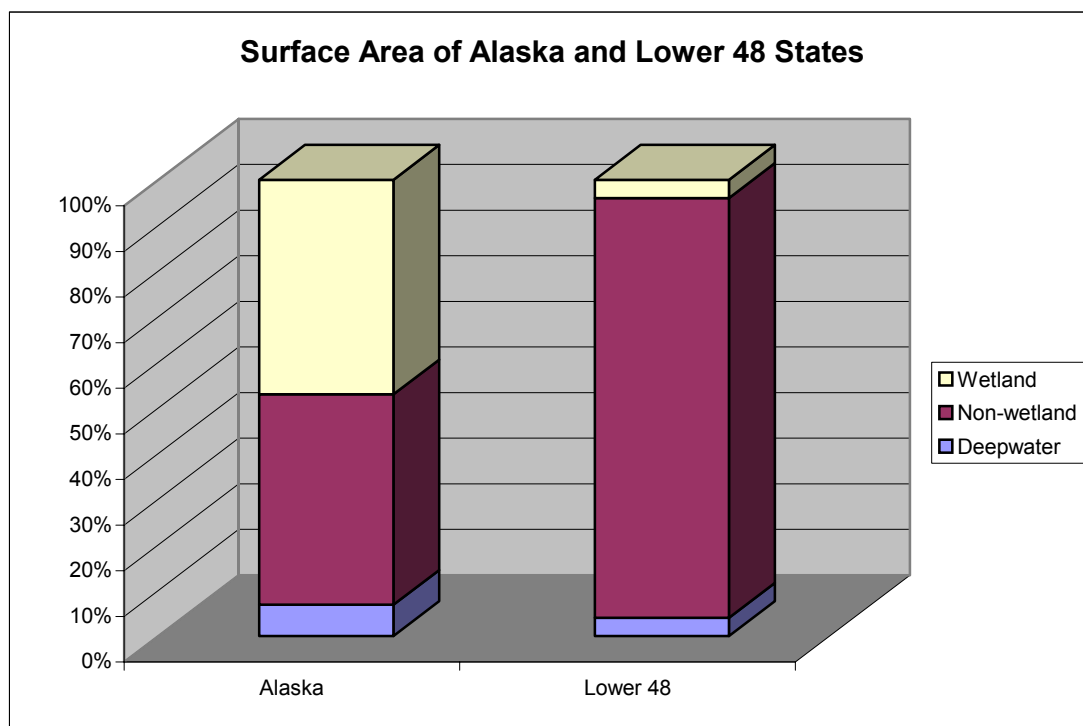


Figure 8.2 - Surface Area of Alaska And Lower 48 States



important to resident and anadromous fish by stabilizing banks, providing nutrient input to riverine channels, maintaining base flow, and providing rearing habitat where small channels enter the streamside marshes.

Wetlands are a conspicuous feature of the landscape in most regions of the state. Treeless expanses of moist and wet tundra underlain by permafrost occur in northern and western portions. Interior Alaska contains millions of acres of black spruce muskeg and floodplain wetlands dominated by deciduous shrubs and emergents. Shrub and herbaceous bogs are common in south central and southeast Alaska. Even in mountainous areas such as the Brooks Range, wetlands have developed in drainages and on vegetated slopes. Some of the nation's most extensive complexes of salt marshes and mud flats occur along the coasts of the Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Bering Sea, and the Gulf of Alaska.

Many wetlands in northern portions of Alaska are underlain and maintained by permafrost, or perennially frozen ground. Wetland conditions often occur because the frozen layer traps water at or near the surface. Other wetlands are maintained by heavy rainfall, glacial melt water, river flooding, beaver activity, snowmelt, springs, impermeable soils, and bedrock.

## **WETLAND FUNCTIONS AND VALUES**

Alaska's wetlands provide many benefits, including:

- . food and habitat for wildlife, fish, and shellfish;
- . natural products for human use and subsistence;
- . surface and groundwater recharge;
- . shoreline erosion and sediment control, floodwater storage; and
- . opportunities for recreation and aesthetic appreciation.

Not all wetlands perform all of these functions, but most provide one or more in varying degrees.

Tundra wetlands in northern and western Alaska are prime breeding grounds for many shorebirds (sandpipers, plovers, and their relatives). Waterfowl species dependent on Alaskan wetlands include more than 100 thousand swans, one million geese, and 12 million ducks. These include more than half the continental populations of tundra and trumpeter swans and all or most of the continental populations of eight species or subspecies of geese.

In recent years, Alaskan wetlands have on average supported 30 percent of the continental populations of northern pintails, 24 percent of American widgeons, 19 percent of scaup, 18 percent of canvasback, and 13 percent of green-winged teal. The importance of Alaskan wetlands to these and other species increases significantly during years when drought occurs in prairie states and provinces.

During migration, huge flocks of waterfowl and shorebirds stop at specific areas for resting and feeding. These critical wetlands provide concentrated food resources necessary to fuel the journey to nesting areas in the spring, or southern destinations in the fall. Nearly all of the Pacific Flyway black brant feed on rich eelgrass beds at Izembek Lagoon on the Alaska Peninsula during fall migration (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1985).

Many mammals in Alaska use specific wetland types and areas. Some species, such as beaver and muskrat, spend most of their lives in wetlands. Other mammals use wetlands primarily as feeding or resting areas. Moose commonly feed on submerged vegetation in deep marshes and shallow ponds, and on willow shrubs that are common in many wetlands. The two largest herds of caribou, both in northern Alaska, gather into huge aggregations and migrate from winter upland areas to coastal wetlands in the summer. Uninterrupted wetlands in the North Slope coastal plain are used by these animals for calving and feeding. Nonvegetated wetland types such as gravel bars and coastal beaches are used to escape insect harassment. Many wetland habitats provide important feeding areas and habitats for bear, deer and migratory songbirds.

Wetlands along Alaska's coasts, rivers, and streams provide a variety of functions that support fisheries. Many fish species feed in wetlands or on food produced by wetlands. Coastal wetlands and streamside marshes are used as nursery grounds. Other wetland types adjacent to rivers are important to fish populations because they maintain and regulate stream flow in the riverine system, and they serve as a protective buffer between the channel and surrounding uplands. Species (e.g., salmon) that move between fresh water and saltwater are dependent on both coastal and riparian wetlands. Annually, the salmon industry in Alaska employs approximately 20,000 people. The ex-vessel value of the commercial salmon fishery in Alaska was \$195 million in 2003. Sportsmen harvested over 1.5 million salmon in 2002. The value of this fishery is difficult to estimate, but sport fishing is a source of income to many small towns and cities throughout the state.

Many wetlands serve to temporarily store floodwaters, thereby protecting downstream property owners from flood damage. The flood storage function also helps to slow the velocity of water, which reduces the water's erosive potential. This function of wetlands is increasingly important in Alaska's towns and cities, where development has increased the rate and volume of surface-water runoff and the potential for flood damage. In areas of Alaska where permafrost is common, the ability of wetlands to store floodwaters is reduced.

Subsistence use of wetland resources in Alaska is extensive. In most areas, wetland habitats provide resources upon which Native village economies are based. A major portion of hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering activities occur in wetlands areas (Ellenna and Wheeler 1986). Fish and wildlife resources harvested for subsistence use and dependent on wetlands include five species of salmon, shellfish, ducks, geese, beaver, and otter. Plant materials frequently collected from wetlands include blueberries, cranberries, Labrador tea, and willow.

Harvest of migratory waterfowl, sandhill cranes, and common snipe by non-rural hunters averages about 68,000 birds per year. Over 25,000 Alaska hunters take water birds annually, with approximately 400,000 birds harvested each year.

The diversity of plant and animal life in wetlands makes them a valuable resource for nonconsumptive recreation such as wildlife viewing and photography. Wetlands, particularly in urban areas, also provide valuable recreational and educational opportunities, open space, and aesthetic enjoyment.

## WETLAND LOSSES

Although there is no completely accurate comprehensive data on wetland losses in Alaska, the USFWS estimates that the state has lost 200,000 acres, or less than one percent of the state's original wetland acreage. A 1989 report on the effects of petroleum operations in Alaska wetlands prepared by Senner (1989) for ARCO Alaska estimated cumulative wetland losses from human activity at 80,000 acres since the time of territorial accession in 1867. The report indicated that the loss estimates would be substantially higher if a complete and more accurate inventory were conducted. In most states, the destruction of wetlands through draining and filling has been much more dramatic. More than 80 percent of the wetlands have disappeared in California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, and Ohio. As a whole, the lower 48 states have lost an estimated 53 percent of their original wetland acreage.

The estimate of total wetland losses in Alaska was determined by the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory staff using a limited amount of actual wetland loss data. Existing trends data covers a few isolated locations, or in some cases was developed only to measure the loss of wetlands from a specific type of development activity. Alaska is not included in the USFWS national wetlands status and trends project, which monitors wetlands losses and gains in ten-year intervals.

While total wetland losses relative to Alaska's vast wetland acreage have been small compared to other areas of the country, the loss of wetlands has been significant in specific areas. The rapid growth of urban centers and the expanding development of oil, gas, mineral, agricultural and timber resources have impacted wetlands in many locations.

Urban development and construction of transportation systems account for the greatest loss of wetlands in Alaska. The state's three largest cities (Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau) are located in areas where wetland density is high. Many towns and villages in northern and western Alaska are built almost entirely on land classified as wetlands. In 1982, the potential for urban expansion to impact remaining wetlands in Anchorage led to the establishment of a local comprehensive wetland management plan. The USFWS conducted an analysis of the losses of wetlands in the Anchorage Bowl. In 1950 the Bowl contained 18,903 acres of wetland. By 1990, 52.7 percent (9,958 acres) of the 1950 wetland base was lost from draining and filling activities (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1993).

The USFWS completed a wetlands trends analysis for the Juneau area in 1986 and included the data as part of the 1987 Juneau Wetland Management Plan (Adamus 1988). The 15,606-acre study area represented most of the developable land in Juneau and vicinity. Wetlands in 1948 comprised 59 percent, or 9,208 acres, of the study area. Based on the analysis of aerial photography, a total of 1,162 acres were filled between 1948 and 1984, representing a loss of about 13 percent of the wetland acreage present in 1948.

Oil and gas development in Alaska has primarily impacted wetlands on the North Slope and along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). Wetland loss as a result of all North Slope petroleum exploration, production, and support activities is estimated at 9,160 acres. An additional 10,900 acres were filled on the North Slope for the construction of TAPS and the associated Dalton Highway. Dalton Highway and TAPS construction in areas south of the North Slope has resulted in a loss of approximately 9,250 acres of wetlands (Senner 1989).



Wetlands in some regions of Alaska have been impacted by the mining of mineral and/or coal resources. Placer mining for gold accounts for most of the wetland losses in this development category. The greatest concentrations of placer mining operations occur in the north central part of the state and on the Seward Peninsula. Wetland density is high in these areas due to the presence of permafrost. Many placer mining sites are located in temporarily or seasonally flooded riparian wetlands. The mining operation includes moving and processing large volumes of earth that may be placed on wetlands. In addition to the loss of wetlands, placer mining may also result in the conversion of natural, undisturbed wetland types to highly modified wetlands such as artificial impoundments or seasonally flooded tailings surfaces.

Wetland losses and alteration due to agricultural development occur primarily in regions underlain by permafrost. Hydric soils in these areas are maintained in a saturated condition by the permafrost layer, which restricts the downward movement of water. Conversion of the poorly drained wetland soils to well-drained soils suitable for agriculture is accomplished by removing the insulating organic surface layer and vegetation cover. Natural drainage of the soil occurs after the soil warms and the permafrost table recedes.

Most of the wetland loss due to agricultural development occurs in the Tanana River and Copper River basins. Approximately 95,000 acres of land in the area have been cleared for agricultural projects. This represents a rise of approximately 5,000 acres since the last survey in 1997. Surveys published by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) indicate that some of the soils in the cleared areas were wetland (hydric) soils prior to development. These wetlands were dominated primarily by black spruce and deciduous shrubs. Measurements of the actual extent of wetland losses in this region have not been made.

Wetland impacts resulting from activities associated with the forest products industry in Alaska are concentrated in the southeast region, but also occur elsewhere in the State. The greatest loss of wetland acreage is due to fill activities from the construction of logging roads. While wetlands are often avoided during construction because of engineering and environmental considerations, their extensive coverage makes it impractical to avoid all wetlands. Most logging occurs in non-wetland areas. The cutting that is done in some needle-leaved evergreen forested wetlands does not usually result in wetland loss. However, the logging activity significantly alters the functions of the wetland areas.

This discussion has focused on the direct loss of wetland acreage in Alaska from filling, draining, or dredging activities. These practices are readily observable, and the resulting cumulative loss of wetlands can be practicably measured. Less apparent is the indirect deterioration of wetland quality resulting from the discharges of materials (e.g., sediment, nutrient loading, pesticides, herbicides, and other pollutants) into wetland environments. Greater attention needs to be paid to the effects of these pollutants on the quality of Alaska's wetlands, particularly as industrial development activities (e.g., municipal wastes, mining, oil and gas, and agriculture) expand in many regions of the State. Alaska has the opportunity to wisely manage wetlands before significant statewide destruction and degradation occurs. In most states this opportunity was lost decades ago.

## WETLAND THREATS

Many of the threats to the wetlands base in Alaska are concentrated around the state's population centers. As the population grows, wetlands will be impacted by residential and commercial development, and associated infrastructure (e.g., roads, utility corridors, airport expansion, and port development). Some impacts are unavoidable as wetlands are a dominant landscape feature in many communities. For example, in some towns and villages in western and northern Alaska over 80 percent of the land surrounding the townsites are classified as wetlands. Wetlands in the coastal zone will be particularly affected by development since population growth is expected to increase more rapidly in coastal areas.

In addition to community expansion, wetlands in Alaska will continue to be affected by other development. It is anticipated that more placer mining will impact riparian wetlands, particularly in the northern half of Alaska. Many proposed mining projects are located in areas where wetlands are common. Oil and gas development has the potential to cause wetland losses in certain areas. It is estimated that 5,000 acres of wetlands will be covered with gravel if large-scale oil development occurs on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (U.S. Department of the Interior 1987). Construction of the proposed Trans-Alaska Gas System – one proposed route an 800-mile pipeline designed to transport natural gas from the North Slope to Valdez - would directly affect approximately 10,800 acres of wetland habitat (Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1988).

Annual wetland losses from logging and from agricultural development are now at a rate less than in the past. An improved farm economy in Alaska would stimulate additional land clearing activities in the areas that have a high potential for agriculture.

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act requires that a Department of the Army permit be obtained for the placement or discharge of dredged and/or fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands, prior to conducting the work (33 U.S.C. 1344). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been delegated responsibility in this area. In some cases, project impacts are such that compensatory mitigation is appropriate.

To address this issue, the Alaska District of the Corps of Engineers has entered into several cooperative agreements with non-profit groups. These agreements provide a mechanism for fees to be paid to participating nonprofit organizations when mitigation is appropriate, but not practicable or difficult to implement. Corps' regulatory customers may, in appropriate cases, opt to pay an in-lieu fee to a partnering non-profit land or natural resource organization. When sufficient funds are obtained, the non-profit can acquire, preserve, enhance, create, rehabilitate, or restore wetlands and other aquatic areas in the general area of the impacting projects. Examples of acceptable uses of in-lieu fees would include, but are not limited to, acquisition of high quality aquatic habitat areas, including wetlands; establishing wetland buffer zones or conservation easements to protect important aquatic resources; and replacing the loss of aquatic resource values by creating, restoring, and enhancing similar functions.

## **SCORP PRIORITIES FOR ACQUISITION**

To be given priority consideration for acquisition, a wetland site must meet the following four criteria:

1. Be access to and/or margins of water bodies, including streams, ponds and coastline.
2. Be emergent wetlands and marshes associated with recreational lakes.
3. Provide a high degree of public recreation benefit or value (including wildlife viewing), at present or potentially in the future (wildlife viewing is a popular, increasing value); and,
4. Be located within 50 miles of an urban or semi-urban or recreation/tourism area, including but not limited to Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Denali, Palmer-Wasilla, Kenai-Soldotna, Kodiak, Ketchikan, and Sitka.

Criterion 4 recognizes that most of Alaska's wetland losses have been in developed areas. Because accessible wetlands near population centers or recreation concentration areas have more recreational value for more people, they should receive priority for acquisition assistance with limited grant-funds.